

# PARAMILITARIES IN THE DISSOLUTION OF THE SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA: EFFECTS ON THE PEACE PROCESS

A Monograph

by

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## ABSTRACT

PARAMILITARIES IN THE DISSOLUTION OF THE SOCIALIST FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA: EFFECTS ON THE PEACE PROCESS, by Mr. Gregory P. Olson, U.S. Agency for International Development, 66 pages.

This monograph examines the role of the paramilitary groups in the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and their effects on the peace process. It offers lessons to political and military leaders considering involvement in conflicts characterized by complex environments, multiple actors, and multiple, changing objectives. It looks at a selection of the paramilitary groups operating in Croatia and Bosnia from 1991-1995 and speculates if their political, economic, or altruistic motives for fighting exacerbated the violence and hindered a peaceful resolution to the conflicts. It examines the contention that state leaders were not able to come to a political agreement on the future of Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia because too many other actors were involved in the conflict who were willing to fight for their own objectives. It is inconclusive whether the involvement of paramilitaries delayed a civil, non-violent break-up of the country. Certainly, by their very participation in the fighting, they contributed to the violence. It is probable that paramilitaries that fought for political objectives that differed from those of the political leaders complicated the peace process since they made it difficult for negotiators to find a solution that satisfied all sides and sought to undermine the political leadership that had to negotiate peace terms. Additionally, paramilitary groups that took advantage of the break down in law and order to turn a profit on the conflicts by stealing from aid convoys, looting stores and homes, holding people for ransom, or other activities exacerbated the situation on the ground but did not directly affect the peace negotiations. It is also likely that the paramilitaries that fought for religious ideals or personal causes did not purposefully hinder the peace process to pursue their goals. By their participation in hostilities, they helped sustain the war like fuel to a fire. The purpose of examining the role paramilitary groups played in the resolution to the wars in Yugoslavia is to provide leaders with insights into the motivations that sub-national groups play in wars and their contribution to the narrative of those wars and their final resolutions. As the conflicts in Yugoslavia have demonstrated, paramilitary groups will often support one side or another while pursuing ulterior objectives. Before making a decision to support one group over another, it is important for leaders to understand the operational environment, the relationships different groups have with each other and their motivations for fighting, and possible second and third order consequences of aligning with one or more groups to a multi-player fight.

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## ACRONYMS

ARBiH	Armija Republike Bosne i Hercegovine (Bosnian Army)
HDZ	Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union)
HOS	Hrvatske Obrambene Snage (Croatian Defense Forces)
HVO	Hrvatsko Vijeće Obrane (Croatian Defense Council)
JNA	Jugoslavenska Narodna Armija (Yugoslavian National Army)
SČP	Srpski Četnički Pokret (Serbian Chetnik Movement)
SPS	Socijalistička Partija Srbije (Socialist Party of Serbia)
SRS	Srpska Radikalna Stranka (Serbian Radical Party)
SSJ	Stranka Srpskog Jedinstva (Serbian Unity Party)
SVK	Srpska Vojska Krajine (Krajina Serb Army)
TO	Teritorialna Obramba (Territorial Defense Units)
UDBA	Uprava Državne Bezbednosti (Yugoslavian State Security Service)
UN	United Nations
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
VJ	Vojska Jugoslavije (Yugoslavian Army)
VRS	Vojska Republike Srpske (Bosnian Serb Army)

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The paramilitaries rob, they rape, they steal. Why are we fighting and what are we fighting for?<sup>1</sup>

—General Slavko Lasica

## INTRODUCTION

Marshal Josep “Tito” Broz died on May 4, 1980. With him died the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> It would take another ten years for the federation to dissolve and another ten years of fighting for a relative peace to settle over the region.<sup>3</sup> With his death, his centralized control over the ruling communist party and over the gradual decentralization of power to the individual republics ended. From that day forward, political groups began openly fighting over control of the country and its future. Seeking to diminish the ability of their competitors to lead the country after the debilitating effects of the economic downturn that hit Yugoslavia in the 1980s, some politicians promulgated an ultra-nationalist platform that blamed the other ethnicities for the country’s troubles.<sup>4</sup> This was not difficult to do for stories of atrocities committed by one ethnic group on another during World War II abounded. Inciting fear and hatred of the other ethnic groups in a select population allowed these politicians to portray themselves as the protector of the rights of that particular ethnic group. By 1990, the jockeying for power came to a head, and the country was on the path to disintegration. Slovenia and Croatia wanted independence. Serbia and Montenegro wanted to remain in a Yugoslav federation but

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<sup>1</sup>Dusko Doder and Louise Branson, *Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1999), 97.

<sup>2</sup>This monograph will use “Yugoslavia” to refer to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the smaller Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that formed after countries declared their independence in the 1990s.

<sup>3</sup>The fighting in Yugoslavia has different names depending on the narrator and is called wars, civil wars, conflicts, ethnic wars, and other names. This monograph will use the words “war,” “conflict,” and “fighting” interchangeably to describe the violence that occurred following Yugoslavia’s dissolution.

<sup>4</sup>M. R. Palairat, “How Long Can the Milosevic Regime Withstand Sanctions,” *RFE/RL Research Report* 2, no. 34 (August 27, 1993): 21–25. “The Yugoslav economy had been rapidly and visibly contracting for several years: per capita total output had declined by about 32% between 1979 and 1990.”



Figure 1. Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990-1995*, Vol. I.<sup>5</sup>

with the power residing in Serbia. Macedonia leaned more towards a loose federation with devolved political power. Bosnia preferred remaining in a federation but saw no future in a country without Slovenia and Croatia and dominated by Serbia.<sup>6</sup> Political leaders were not able to work out their differences and war broke out on June 26, 1991, between Slovenia and Serbia (technically still Yugoslavia) and spread to Croatia and Bosnia.

Over eighty-three paramilitary groups participated in the conflict between 1991 – 1995 in

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<sup>5</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990-1995*, vol. I (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2002).

<sup>6</sup>*Yugoslavia's Wars: The Problem from Hell* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1995), <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub160.pdf>, (accessed October 5, 2013), 40.

Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia, according to the United Nations (UN): fifty-four supported the Serbs, thirteen supported the Croats, and fourteen supported the Bosnian Muslims.<sup>7</sup> Scholars, journalists, and politicians disagree about whether the leaders of the different Yugoslav republics could have peacefully resolved their differences because of the reported long-standing animosities between the different ethnic groups. Each side to the conflict established armed forces that fought for its cause (see Table 1). These armed forces originated from the territorial defense units (TO) which Yugoslavia had established in each of the republics. Many of the senior leaders came from the Yugoslavian National Army (JNA), and many of the smaller entities received outside support in terms of money and equipment. For example, Croatia provided arms and financial assistance to the Bosnian Croatian Army called the Croatian Defense Council (HVO). The Yugoslav Army (VJ), the successor to the JNA after Slovenia and Croatia seceded, provided equipment and financial support to the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS) as well as to the Krajina Serb Army (SVK) in Croatia. In addition, each side used paramilitary groups to protect their territorial claims and carry out attacks on the opposing forces and populations. Paramilitaries were technically not part of the official armed forces of a country, so political leaders could deny that they had any control over them and thereby have plausible deniability for any crimes they committed. Serbian President Slobodan Milošević used paramilitaries to support and provoke conflict between Serb communities and local authorities, after which he would call in the JNA to suppress the fight on the side of the Serbs under the guise of re-establishing peace and stability in the area.<sup>8</sup> In this

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<sup>7</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces* (United Nations Security Council, December 28, 1994), [www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/comexpert/anx/III-A.htm](http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/comexpert/anx/III-A.htm) (accessed July 1, 2013), 6.

<sup>8</sup>Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 170.

Table 1. Major Armed Forces in the Breakup of Yugoslavia and Affiliation

Abbreviation	Name	Affiliation
HV	Croatian Defense Forces	Croatia
HVO	Croatian Defense Council	Bosnian Croats
ARBiH	Armed Forces of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina	Bosnia
VRS	Bosnian Serb Army	Bosnian Serbs
VJ	Yugoslav Army	Yugoslavia/Serbia
JNA	Yugoslavian National Army	Yugoslavia/Serbia
SVK	Krajina Serb Army	Krajina Serbs
TORS	Territorial Defense of the Republic of Slovenia	Slovenia

Source: Created by author.

manner, he was able to establish his control over Serbian-held territories in Croatia and Bosnia.<sup>9</sup>

This monograph will look at the conflicts between Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia from 1991 – 1995 and test the hypothesis that many of the paramilitaries that fought in the conflict in Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia used the context of war for self-serving activities, which intensified the conflicts and delayed a civil, political resolution to the breakup.<sup>10</sup> It contends that state leaders were not able to come to a political agreement on the future of Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia either before or shortly after violence broke out because the paramilitaries involved in the conflict were willing to fight for their own political, monetary, or personal objectives. Paramilitary groups developed in different manners over the course of the war. Several groups, such as the Croatian Defense Forces (HOS) and Croatian Defense Council (HVO), were military arms of Croatian political parties. Though both of these groups supported the Croatian side, both, especially the

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<sup>9</sup>Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers - America's Last Ambassador Tells What Happened and Why* (New York: Times Books, 1996), 99-101.

<sup>10</sup>This monograph will refer to all countries by their shortened names (Yugoslavia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, etc.) rather than their official titles, such as Republic of Croatia.

HOS, had Muslim in their ranks who joined to fight their common enemy, the Serbs.<sup>11</sup> More Muslims joined the HOS than the HVO because the HOS wanted to protect the territorial integrity of Bosnia.<sup>12</sup> Other groups, such as Caco's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Brigade and Juka's Wolves, were criminal gangs controlled by their respective leaders that took advantage of the war for monetary gain. Still other groups, such as the El Mujaheed, fought for religious reasons. The war itself provided the opportunity for paramilitaries to operate openly with relative impunity. They often had several objectives that coexisted. Juka's Wolves, for example, fought the Serbs to defend Sarajevo while amassing wealth for themselves in the process.

Studying the motivations of sub-national groups in a conflict has implications for political leaders, armed forces, and international organizations that seek to negotiate settlements to civil wars or to determine if they should get involved in other countries' internal conflicts. Their choosing of sides or determination of peace stipulations can leave many aggrieved parties unsatisfied, setting the stage for future conflicts. In a chaotic situation in which the traditional center of power disappears or weakens, contenders for the leadership positions arise and bring with them their own agendas. In an analysis of disruptions to peace processes, Dr. Studman calls these aggrieved parties spoilers and classifies them as limited, greedy, or total depending on their goals and commitment to those goals.<sup>13</sup> In addition, mediators who are not familiar with the local customs, culture, and relationships between the various local leaders will not understand or will misunderstand the situation and thus be unable to find a satisfying compromise. This is what

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<sup>11</sup>Patrick Moore, "Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia: Outrage by Little Action," *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, no. 34 (August 28, 1992): 1–7.

<sup>12</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 14.

<sup>13</sup>Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1997): 5–53.

occurred during the breakup of Yugoslavia where “the complexity of the situation has baffled and frustrated international mediators.”<sup>14</sup>

### Definition of a Paramilitary

There is no standard definition of what constitutes a paramilitary force. A group of 60-armed men or a force of 2,000 men can be a paramilitary group. Despite this discrepancy, there are several characteristics that paramilitaries have in common. First, a paramilitary organization is usually armed. Second, a paramilitary organization is separate from a country’s formal armed forces, though it may work with or even under the formal forces. Third, a paramilitary organization does not always have official reporting channels through the government. Governments often use paramilitary groups in order to have a degree of deniability for any actions that may or may not occur. Having this deniability allows the government to have actions carried out which support its cause but which might not be politically acceptable. The UN describes the different forms that a paramilitary organization might have taken during the wars in Yugoslavia as organized or unorganized groups; related to a particular political party, government, or territory; created spontaneously or through a deliberate process; or, any combination of these. For its report on Yugoslavia, it uses four categories to describe paramilitary groups: Special Forces, militias, paramilitary units, and police augmented by armed civilians.<sup>15</sup> This monograph uses the term paramilitary in line with the UN categorization of paramilitary groups and uses paramilitary to refer to both a group and an individual member of a group. These groups were not part of the formal armed forces of either Bosnia, Croatia, or Serbia. However, they often acted in concert with the formal forces, often had ties with and reported to government

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<sup>14</sup>Milan Andrejevich, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: In Search of Peace,” *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, no. 23 (June 5, 1992): 1–11.

<sup>15</sup>*Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to the Security Council Resolution 780 (1992)*, 1994. Annex III, 4-5.

officials, and often received material or monetary support from the formal armed forces or government leaders. In addition, these paramilitary organizations could act independently from the official government forces and consisted primarily of individuals who voluntarily joined these groups, often receiving training outside of official military organizations.

An obvious question to ask is why were there so many paramilitary groups? The following are three reasons that might explain this. First, political leaders used paramilitary groups to overcome the shortage of recruits to the national armies. The JNA faced of shortage of men and suffered from a large number of desertions. When Milošević ordered a call-up of reservists to bolster the numbers of men in the JNA ready to fight, “between 50 and 85 percent of Serb men called up to fight in Croatia either went into hiding or left the country (200,000 men reportedly went abroad to avoid the draft) rather than fight. In addition, about 50,000 reservists who did go into the army deserted from the front.”<sup>16</sup> Milošević also faced mass protests in Belgrade over the conduct of the war. Therefore, using paramilitaries allowed him to overcome this civilian resistance.<sup>17</sup> Second, paramilitary groups formed out of previous territorial defense units (TO). The Yugoslav military consisted of both a national army, the JNA, and territorial defense units made up primarily of reservists. These TOs were located throughout all of the republics down to the municipal level and had their own weapons and munitions. They were small, battalion sized units organized along Tito’s doctrine of “general popular self-defense and society’s self-protection.”<sup>18</sup> When Yugoslavia broke up, there was no orderly division of the military forces to the different republics. Milošević attempted and eventually succeeded in turning the JNA into a pro-Serbia military, while the TO units, depending on their locations, sided

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<sup>16</sup>V. P Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 109.

<sup>17</sup>Franke Wilmer, *The Social Construction of Man, the State, and War: Identity, Conflict, and Violence in the Former Yugoslavia* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 194.

<sup>18</sup>Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 117-118.

with different parties to the conflict. These TOs took up arms to defend their towns or ethnic group and were thus involved in the war as paramilitaries. Third, political parties formed their own military groups to advance or protect their political agendas. By having a group of armed men supporting the party platform, a political party could back up its platform by force.

### Literature Review

Many sources exist on the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Many of them broadly cover the history of the region, the politics behind the war, and the war itself, especially the ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. While almost all of the literature on Yugoslavia during this time acknowledge the presence of paramilitary groups and their criminal actions of ethnic cleansing, looting, raping, and other crimes, few go into detail about these groups, why they formed in the first place, what motivated their members, or what were their objectives in these conflicts.

One of the most detailed sources on the paramilitary groups is in the United Nations *Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to the Security Council Resolution 780 (1992)* which lists out all the known paramilitary groups and the known facts about them.<sup>19</sup> However, the report does not examine the facts in detail to determine the motivations behind these groups and individuals or lessons learned from the roles they played in the conflict. Laura Silber and Allan Little take a close look at the build up to the war and the politics behind it in their book called *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*.<sup>20</sup> In it, Silber and Little examine the politics behind the breakup of Yugoslavia and the major personalities that contributed to its demise or that tried to hold it together. They disparage the West for not

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<sup>19</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*.

<sup>20</sup>Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. This book is also a BBC documentary produced by Norma Percy, Nicholas Fraser, Brian Lapping, and Tihomir Loze called *The Death of Yugoslavia*, that aired on September 3, 1995. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oODjsdLoSYo> (accessed August 15, 2013).



understanding the causes of the breakup, for not taking a strong stand to halt the violence, and for believing that the conflict was the result of some genetic predisposition that the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims had for violence. They provide a detailed study of the political maneuvering taking place in each of the countries during the build up to the conflict and during the conflict, the struggle for power within the communist party in the late 1980s, and the scramble for power among lower level politicians. They state that ethnicity was a tool that others used to incite fear and gain control over the populations but that ethnic tensions were not the cause of the conflict. Finally, they acknowledge the collusion between different warring factions and their material interest that accrued due to the conflict, but they do not pursue this further other than a few anecdotes. David Reiff in *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* examines the war in Bosnia shortly after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords.<sup>21</sup> He criticizes the western nations for not having done more to either prevent or stop the atrocities. He argues that western countries should have taken a moral stand instead of abiding by their mandate as peacekeepers and standing by while innocent civilians were slaughtered. He notes that international organizations and the UN in particular, often gave a portion of their aid deliveries to the militants in order to be allowed to proceed across enemy lines to deliver aid. Reiff notes that paramilitary groups did the majority of the ethnic cleansing for the official army so that the national leaders could have plausible deniability. Marko Hoare in *How Bosnia Armed* examines how the Yugoslavian Army (JNA) disintegrated during the breakup of Yugoslavia.<sup>22</sup> He shows how internal differences divided the JNA leadership between maintaining the integrity of the entire Yugoslav republic and letting the individual republics secede from the federation. He

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<sup>21</sup>David Reiff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

<sup>22</sup>Marko Attila Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed* (London: Saqi Books in association with the Bosnian Institute, 2004).

demonstrates how Milošević finally coopted the JNA to support Serbian interests above all others, how Bosnian Serb military leaders and weapons were transferred to the Bosnian Serbs as a separate military force from the JNA, how the Bosnian Army evolved from a loose group of paramilitary units to an official army supporting the country of Bosnia, and how Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović coopted this army to quash independent paramilitary units and support his political agenda. He mentions that political leaders and paramilitary groups used the turmoil in Bosnia to enrich themselves though he does not delve deeply into this topic. He also describes internal political rivalries and rivalries between paramilitary groups as contributing factors to the inability of any group from halting the siege of Sarajevo and hints that this was because of personal financial interests in keeping the siege rather than any actual inability to fight the Serbs. He notes that collusion took place between the Croatian HVO, Bosnian Army, and the Serbs surrounding Sarajevo to profit from the black market that developed in supplying goods that were in short supply.<sup>23</sup> Steven Burg and Paul S. Shoup in *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* focus on the causes of the war in Bosnia and the response from the international community.<sup>24</sup> They, like others, question why it took so long for the international community to intervene in stopping the violence. They note that all sides used paramilitaries in prosecuting the war and that many individuals used the conflict as an opportunity to accumulate wealth and power. They provide some information on the groups such as the Black Swans, Red Berets, HOS, and Arkan's Tigers, and their links to organized crime or political groups. They acknowledge that these groups manipulated events for political purposes but do not go into detail about each group.

There is debate among scholars and historians as to whether or not ethnic tensions

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 74.

<sup>24</sup>Steven L Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

between various ethnic groups made the resulting violent conflicts inevitable. Robert D. Kaplan in *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History* and *A Reader's Guide to the Balkans* makes the case that the different ethnic groups have been in conflict for ages and that there was nothing the international community do to make them live together.<sup>25</sup> William T. Johnsen in his monograph, *Deciphering the Balkan Enigma: Using History to Inform Policy*, contends that violence between the groups has always been part of their history and is an acceptable way to mend differences.<sup>26</sup> He notes that the war in Yugoslavia was not a single war but a mélange of ethnic conflict, civil war, personal war, and conventional war, among other types of conflicts. Lenard J. Cohan in *Broken Bonds: the Disintegration of Yugoslavia*, examines the historical development of Yugoslavia to find the causes for its violent break up.<sup>27</sup> He contends that the violence was inevitable, as leaders never abated the interethnic animosities from previous wars. Likewise, Samuel P. Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations* states that a “fault line” runs through the Balkans where Christianity and Islam meet and where conflict is inevitable.<sup>28</sup> On the other side of the debate, V. P. Gagnon in *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* studied the election polls and politics before, during, and after the conflict started and determined that ethnicity was not the root of the conflict.<sup>29</sup> Rather, the grab for power as the communist party

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<sup>25</sup>Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (New York: Picador : Distributed by Holtzbrinck Publishers, 2005); Robert D. Kaplan, “A Reader’s Guide to the Balkans,” *The New York Times*, April 18, 1993, Late edition, sec. A.

<sup>26</sup>William T. Johnsen, “Deciphering the Balkan Enigma: Using History to Inform Policy” (U.S. Army War College, November 7, 1995), <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub159.pdf>. (accessed November 19, 2013).

<sup>27</sup>Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993).

<sup>28</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22–49.

<sup>29</sup>Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*.

wrestled for power in the face of calls for reforms drove leaders to push the ethnic divide in order to demobilize opposition and suppress reforms. In addition, he states that leaders carefully planned the ethnic violence and that it was not part of the people's predisposition for violence against one another as often portrayed in the media. Antonija Petričušić and Mitja Žagar in their paper, *Ethnic Mobilization in Croatia. Country Specific Report on Actors and Processes of Ethno- Mobilization, Violent Conflicts and Consequences: Croatia*, argue that politicians purposely manipulated perceived ethnic differences to gain power.<sup>30</sup> They look at other factors that contributed to the violence such as economic conditions and the mixing of religion into ethnic identity, though the combatants were not fighting a war of religion, nor were they particularly religious themselves. Finally, they indicate that emigrants from these countries played a role in stoking nationalist ethnic identities for each side of the war. Christopher Bennett in *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse* argues that the disintegration of Yugoslavia was not inevitable.<sup>31</sup> He looks for a rational explanation to the collapse and disputes the argument that there was a natural predisposition for violence between the different ethnic groups in Yugoslavia or that the international community could not stop the violence because it was powerless to do so. He argues that Yugoslavia fell apart because of rational decisions made by leaders to whip up nationalism among the people to a point of hysteria. He also argues that the media had a major role to play, as it did not provide an objective view of events on the ground and only stirred up hysteria. The *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Eastern Europe (FBIS-EEU) Daily Reports* provide information and news reports from a variety of sources emanating from within the republics themselves as well as from outside sources. The reports coming from the media in individual

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<sup>30</sup>Antonija Petričušić and Mitja Žagar, *Ethnic Mobilization in Croatia*, Country Specific Report on Actors and Processes of Ethno-Mobilization, Violent Conflicts and Consequences: FP6 Project "Human and Minority Rights in the Life Cycle of Ethnic Conflicts" (Bozen/Bolzano: European Academy, 2007), <http://www.eurac.edu/en/research/institutes/imr/Documents/CroatiaReport.pdf> (accessed July 17, 2013).

<sup>31</sup>Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1995).

countries are often biased but do provide an insight into how each side viewed the others and the events that were unfolding at the time. In contrast, the *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) Research Reports* and *Jane's Defense Review* from the 1990s provide more objective analysis on the conflicts, the political maneuvering, and the peace negotiation process. They provide some insight into the paramilitary groups but do not go into great detail about them outside of reporting on their activities. One book that does look into economic gains criminal activity could make during the war is Peter Andreas' *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo*.<sup>32</sup> In it, Mr. Andreas examines the workings of the black market and international organizations in Sarajevo during the war in Bosnia. He finds that the international organizations unwittingly supported the black market. They did this by purchasing goods that had been smuggled into Sarajevo, providing foreign currency to locals trapped in the city through these purchases, salary payments, or giving a portion of their aid shipments to the besiegers in order to gain access to the city. He also notes that criminal organizations, paramilitary groups, and even official army organizations benefitted from the siege by being able to provide goods to the market at inflated prices, control various goods going into the city (gas, food, cigarettes, etc.), and even collude with the "enemy" to benefit financially. The Central Intelligence Agency's two-volume *Balkan Battleground: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990-1995*, provides a military history of all the battles in the years covered.<sup>33</sup> The authors wanted to refute the myths that participants in the war were undisciplined paramilitary groups outside of government control. Instead, they attempt to show that well-organized armies with command and control structures and hierarchies did most of the fighting.

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<sup>32</sup>Peter Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets: The Business of Survival in the Siege of Sarajevo* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>33</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, 2002; Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds: A Military History of the Yugoslav Conflict, 1990-1995*, vol. II (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2005).

Finally, newspaper articles provide a vast amount of information on both the war and the activities of paramilitary groups. However, these also do not go into a deep analysis of the paramilitary groups and their members. John F. Burns, in *The New York Times* and *The Globe and Mail* in Toronto, Ontario, reports on the paramilitary's links with the war and their use of the conflict to gain political power, accumulate personal wealth, and challenge the rule of local authorities. He recounts how Mušan Topalović, a.k.a. Caco and leader of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Brigade, accumulated wealth in Sarajevo by controlling the black market and even attacked three local police stations with his militia group rather than fighting the Serbs surrounding the city together. While not stated explicitly, Burns implies that this attack resulted from an effort on behalf of the police to crack down on local crime and that this occurred around the time of negotiations regarding the partitioning of Bosnia into three separate entities. He also recounts the story of Ismet Bajramović, a.k.a. Celo, a criminal-turned-paramilitary commander in Sarajevo, who controlled a portion of the black market in Sarajevo based on smuggled arms, food, and prostitution and controlled many of the cafes and night clubs in Sarajevo, smuggled people out of Sarajevo for a price, and was influential enough to upset any proposed peace deal. Maria Vivod takes a close look at paramilitary groups and their criminal connections in her paper, *In the Shadow of the Serbian Paramilitary Units: Narrative Patterns about the Role of Paramilitary Units in Former Yugoslav Conflict*.<sup>34</sup> She notes that many paramilitary members live better after the war than their compatriots as a result of the financial gains they made during the war. She also notes the feelings among the paramilitary members that the 1990s were a time of glory for them, as though they were not only above the law, but that they were the law and held the power over others that allowed them to do as they pleased. Ian Traynor from *The Guardian* reports on the

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<sup>34</sup>Maria Vivod, "In the Shadow of the Serbian Paramilitary Units: Narrative Patterns about the Role of Paramilitary Units in Former Yugoslav Conflict," *Advances in Anthropology* 3, no. No. 1 (2013): 23–32.

situation in 1993 in Bosnia and notes that not only were the paramilitary units and criminals vying for control over Sarajevo, whether it be for power, money, or turf, but that there was going to be a day of reckoning soon when these forces would explode in open warfare.<sup>35</sup>

## PARAMILITARIES AND POLITICAL POWER

The wars that erupted in Yugoslavia provided the opportunity for different groups to attempt to seize political power at a local level within different regions or at a national level in the individual republics. The death of Tito in 1980 led to a power struggle within the Yugoslav Communist Party that culminated in the dissolution of the federation. In fact, there were ten communist parties in Yugoslavia prior to 1991. In addition to the federal Yugoslav Communist Party, there were regional parties for each of the six republics, the two autonomous regions, and the Yugoslav national army.<sup>36</sup> With the opening of the political arena to non-communist parties in 1990, additional political parties sprang up: the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Serbian Chetnik Movement (SČP), and others. These parties held competing views on what the future of Yugoslavia should look like, what reforms, if any, should be advanced, and who should be in power. Some, such as the HDZ, wanted to separate from Yugoslavia. Others, such as the HSP, wanted to separate from Yugoslavia and change the borders of the individual republics, while others wanted to keep Yugoslavia intact without any changes

In the build up to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, many politicians used old, historical ethnic rivalries, whether they were real or not, for their own political purposes to gain people's support. They proactively played on their fears of the future and "manipulated nationalism and

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<sup>35</sup>Ian Traynor, "Chicago, Bosnia When the Bosnian Conflict Is Finally Resolved and Peace Arrives in Sarajevo, Another War Is Set to Erupt - the Showdown between Rival Gangs Fighting for Control of the Battered Siege City, and the First Shot of This Bloody Reckoning, Ian Traynor Reports, May Already Have Been Heard with the Assassination Attempt on an Underworld Linchpin.," *The Guardian*, October 26, 1993, (pre-1997 Fulltext) edition, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/293597301?accountid=28992> (accessed September 22, 2013).

<sup>36</sup>Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 29.

violence to advance their political agendas to achieve and maintain power moved into the vacuum created by the decomposing Yugoslavia.”<sup>37</sup> Many politicians formed or used paramilitary groups to create instability in order to weaken their opponents and create opportunities to grab power. It is likely that the paramilitary groups’ struggles for political power disrupted or complicated the peace negotiations between the warring factions causing a delay in any settlement. These groups sought to grab power from a rival, defeat a political opponent, or to force a political agenda onto the population at large. This struggle for power characterizes the actions of Fikret Abdić, the proxy war fought in Bosnia between two Croatian political parties and their respective paramilitary groups, and in Vojislav Šešelj’s use of his Chetnik paramilitary group.

#### Fikret Abdić and the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia

Fikret “Babo” Abdić, a Bosnian Muslim, was a politician in the Party for Democratic Action (SDA) in Bosnia who used the war to attempt to take power away from President Izetbegović as demonstrated by him signing a peace deal on behalf of the Bosnian government without Izetbegović’s consent, creating a mini-state within Bosnia with its own army and with himself as the leader, and switching allegiances to side with his enemies against his government. Together, these actions complicated the ability of the warring parties to come to a political settlement since a new contender to power with his own objectives had to be appeased and a new front opened in the war, this time Muslim against Muslim, further escalating the violence.

First, Abdić signed a peace deal on behalf of the Bosnian government without the president’s consent. This outward sign of rebellion demonstrated his contempt for the president’s policy of not suing for peace early in the conflict to maintain his vision of a united Bosnia at the expense of countless lives and Abdić’s desire to lead the country to a political settlement to stop

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<sup>37</sup> Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance*, International Peace Academy (Boulder; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 170.



the war. The build up to this situation occurred over time. He had political ambitions before the war as demonstrated by his run against Izetbegović for the presidency in 1990. Although he won, he did not assume the position, and Izetbegović became the head of the seven-member presidency and president of Bosnia. The exact nature of their agreement is unclear, but it is likely that this deal occurred because Izetbegović held more support and influence within the SDA. In exchange, Abdić named one of his loyal supporters to the position of Interior Minister.<sup>38</sup> Prior to this, Abdić was the director of one of Yugoslavia's largest companies, a state-owned poultry and food processing company called Agrokomerc. In 1987, he began a prison sentence for financial wrongdoing having used his company to "issue \$300 million in unbacked promissory notes."<sup>39</sup> He reportedly continued his financial shenanigans during the war by defrauding Muslim refugees and extended families living in Europe out of £5.6 million, which they paid to him to assist in getting their relatives out of Bosnia.<sup>40</sup> For this, the Austrian government issued a warrant for his arrest. During the war, he also freely traded with both Croats and Serbs to keep the Bihać area supplied with arms, fuel, and food.<sup>41</sup> On April 27, 1992, he mediated a meeting of the three ethnic parties in Bihać to discuss the control (i.e. division) of territory of that region in northwestern Bosnia.<sup>42</sup> This negotiation directly contravened Izetbegović's stance that Bosnia should not be

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<sup>38</sup>Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*. 211; Anes Alic and Jen Tracy, "The Nine Lives of a Bosnian Businessman," *Transitions Online*, June 21, 2002, [www.tol.org/client/article/4926-the-nine-lives-of-a-bosnian-businessman.html](http://www.tol.org/client/article/4926-the-nine-lives-of-a-bosnian-businessman.html) (accessed October 9, 2013); United States and Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, 161; John R. Schindler, *Unholy Terror: Bosnia, Al-Qa'ida, and the Rise of Global Jihad* (St. Paul, MN: Zenith Press, 2007), 51-53.

<sup>39</sup>Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 211.

<sup>40</sup>Ed Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell: Understanding Bosnia's War* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 301.

<sup>41</sup>Carol J. Williams, "Bihać Bigwig Key Player in Bosnia End Game : Balkans: Fikret Abdić Has What Many Consider a Valid Point to Make about the Right of the Republic's President to Stay in Power.," *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1993 (accessed October 9, 2013); Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell*, 301-302.

<sup>42</sup>Andrejevich, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: In Search of Peace," 10.

divided. Abdić agreed with this plan; Izetbegović did not. Furthermore, in May 1992, when Izetbegović was in the custody of the Serbs at the Sarajevo airport, Abdić drove from Croatia to Sarajevo to assume the position of President of Bosnia. Unfortunately, Izetbegović outmaneuvered him and deputized one of his men, Ejup Ganić, to act in his stead since he feared that Abdić was making a move to replace him.<sup>43</sup> By June 1993, Abdić was deeply involved in Bosnian political intrigue to diminish Izetbegović's power and to take over the leadership position in order to negotiate a deal that would divide Bosnia between the warring parties. He openly criticized Izetbegović for not wanting to attend the summer peace talks in Geneva that were to be held in July 1993 and maneuvered to have the Bosnian presidency agree to the summer meetings despite Izetbegović's refusal. These talks centered around the Vance-Owen peace plan that proposed that Bosnia be a unified state internally divided into three units along ethnic lines with ten provinces in total. The central government would comprise of representatives from each of the three entities. In other words, the plan called for the division of Bosnia along three ethnic lines with the Muslims getting the smallest and land-locked portion. The Croats liked the plan, as it would grant them territory that they desired in western Bosnia. The Serbs were divided with Milošević agreeing to the plan, but the Bosnia Serbs against it.<sup>44</sup> Denied the position of authority to accept the Vance-Owen peace plan, Abdić realized that Bosnia, while Izetbegović was still in power, would not agree to a deal that ethnically divided the country, no matter how long the war lasted.

Unable to end the war on what he saw as acceptable terms, Abdić declared his own state within Bosnia, the Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia (APWB) in Bihać, in September

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<sup>43</sup>Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 238.

<sup>44</sup>Jasminka Udovički and James Ridgeway, eds., *Yugoslavia's Ethnic Nightmare: The Inside Story of Europe's Unfolding Ordeal* (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1995), 190-193.

1993 (Figure 2).<sup>45</sup> Shortly afterwards, in Sarajevo, the members of the “Bosnia-Herzegovina presidency...relieved him of his duties in this state body.”<sup>46</sup> Having been kicked out of the Bosnian government and denied the chance to direct the political process to negotiate with the Serbs and Croats, Abdić decided to create his own state and negotiate his own peace deals. To support his new state, he raised a private army of 5,000 – 10,000 men from loyalists in the Bihać region many of which were employees of Agorkomerc who remained loyal to Abdić throughout the war. In addition, members of the Bosnian Army 5<sup>th</sup> Corps in Bihać defected to his cause, including the 521<sup>st</sup> Brigade and the 527<sup>th</sup> Brigade.<sup>47</sup> He used this private army to usurp control from the Bosnian government in the Bihać region, support his government, control the media, attack the Bosnian Army, and provoke unrest and rebellion among his followers.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, Abdić switched loyalties to legitimize his position and to attempt to bring peace to his state. He worked with the Bosnian and Krajina Serbs to acquire arms, defend his territory from the Bosnian Army, and keep himself in power. On October 22, 1993, he signed a peace agreement with Radovan Karadžić, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, who declared that the Republika Srpska would recognize the APWB.<sup>49</sup> No other country recognized either of these two entities. Meanwhile, Abdić continued to clash with the Bosnian Army’s 5<sup>th</sup> Corps, which Izetbegović tasked with defeating Abdić and his rebels. Reports indicate that the Bosnian Serbs as

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<sup>45</sup>Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 306.

<sup>46</sup>*Foreign Broadcast Information Service Eastern Europe Daily Reports*, October 1, 1993, 29.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>49</sup>Reuters, “Rebel Muslim Signs Pact with Bosnian Serbs : Balkans: Observers Say Move by Leader of Bihac Pocket May Have Little Practical Effect,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1993.

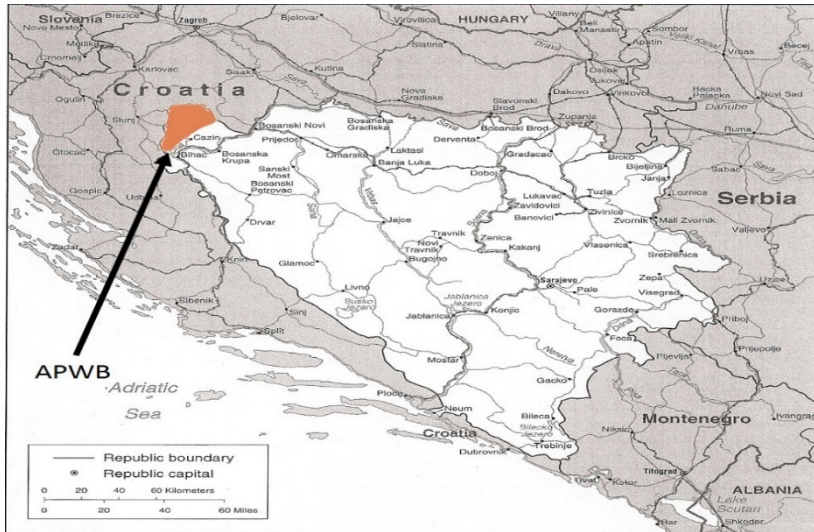


Figure 2. Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia.

Source: Created by author.

well as the Krajina Serbs in Croatia militarily supported and cooperated with Abdić in his fight against the Bosnian Army. The battles raged through August 1994 when the Bosnian Army defeated Abdić's army after which both he and tens of thousands of residents of Bihać fled to Croatia.<sup>50</sup> Though the Bosnian Army defeated him, Abdić retained a hold on his loyalists who

<sup>50</sup>Dean E. Murphy, "Rebel Muslims Face Life as Outcasts in Two Lands," *Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 1995, [http://articles.latimes.com/1995-08-12/news/mn-34205\\_1\\_bosnian-muslims](http://articles.latimes.com/1995-08-12/news/mn-34205_1_bosnian-muslims) (accessed October 6, 2013); Williams, "Bihać Bigwig Key Player in Bosnia End Game : Balkans: Fikret Abdić Has What Many Consider a Valid Point to Make about the Right of the Republic's President to Stay in Power."; Carol J. Williams, "Defying West, Bosnian Muslim Warlord Pushes Followers Toward Croatia : Balkans: Defeated by Government, Fikret Abdić Continues to Foment Revolt. Aid Workers Fear He May Provoke a Deadly Faceoff," *Los Angeles Times*, August 8, 1993, [http://articles.latimes.com/1993-07-24/news/mn-16376\\_1\\_fikret-abdic](http://articles.latimes.com/1993-07-24/news/mn-16376_1_fikret-abdic) (accessed October 6, 2013); Marjorie Miller, "Rebel Muslim Is Said to OK Truce in Northern Bosnia : Balkans: Top U.N. Commander in Republic Reportedly Obtains Pledge. Bihać Fighting Threatened Government Participation in Further Peace Talks," *Los Angeles Times*, December 29, 1994, [http://articles.latimes.com/1994-12-29/news/mn-14205\\_1\\_muslim-rebel-leader](http://articles.latimes.com/1994-12-29/news/mn-14205_1_muslim-rebel-leader) (accessed October 6, 2013); Marjorie Miller, "Victorious Rebel Muslim Takes Followers Back to Their Bihać Home : Bosnia: The Return of Fikret Abdić Is a Setback for the Government. His Supporters Call Him 'Daddy,'" *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 1994, [http://articles.latimes.com/1994-12-31/news/mn-14953\\_1\\_fikret-abdic](http://articles.latimes.com/1994-12-31/news/mn-14953_1_fikret-abdic) (accessed October 6, 2013); Carol J. Williams, "Muslim's Drive for Fiefdom Ends in Chaos : Bosnia: Followers of Warlord Fikret Abdić Flee an Offensive by the Sarajevo Government. They Seek Refuge among Croatian Serb Supporters," *Los Angeles Times*, August 10, 1994, <http://articles.latimes.com/1994->

followed him into Croatia and stayed with him there despite the Bosnian government's promise of amnesty if they returned home. He caused western leaders consternation, as they feared that Abdić and his followers would incite another conflict in Croatia now that Abdić clearly sided with the Serbs. His revolt and establishment of his own state within Bosnia tied up several thousand troops that the Bosnian government could not use to prosecute the war for the whole country. His actions added another layer of complexity to an already complex war, which distracted political leaders from negotiating a peaceful settlement to the war. As it were, Abdić threw the Bosnian government into turmoil and added another actor into the negotiations that were taking place. In fact, British Lieutenant General Michel Rose, commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), had to meet separately with Abdić in order to obtain his consent to abide by a cease-fire that former-President Jimmy Carter had negotiated between the Bosnian government and Bosnian Serbs.<sup>51</sup> By turning the Muslims in the Bihać region against the Bosnian government, he created another group who had to settle scores and baffled Western diplomats who saw him as unrealistic, exploitative and "always available to the highest bidder."<sup>52</sup>

### HOS and HVO Proxy War

Within the governments of the newly independent republics, paramilitary groups took part in the struggle for power. In Croatia, two political parties, the Croatian Democratic Union

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08-10/news/mn-25552\_1\_fikret-abdic (accessed October 6, 2013); Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, 2002, 186-189; Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 154-156; Reuters, "Rebel Muslim Signs Pact With Bosnian Serbs : Balkans: Observers Say Move by Leader of Bihac Pocket May Have Little Practical Effect."

<sup>51</sup>Miller, "Rebel Muslim Is Said to OK Truce in Northern Bosnia : Balkans: Top U.N. Commander in Republic Reportedly Obtains Pledge. Bihac Fighting Threatened Government Participation in Further Peace Talks."; *Yugoslavia's Wars: The Problem from Hell*, 16.

<sup>52</sup>Miller, "Victorious Rebel Muslim Takes Followers Back to Their Bihac Home : Bosnia: The Return of Fikret Abdić Is a Setback for the Government. His Supporters Call Him 'Daddy.'"

(HDZ) and the Croatian Party of Rights (HSP), used their own paramilitary groups (the HVO and HOS respectively) to fight a proxy war in Bosnia for dominance of their political objectives regarding the ultimate end state for Croatia. At the heart of the matter was whether Croatia should absorb only part of Bosnia or the entire republic.<sup>53</sup> There was no consensus on this issue, so the political parties fought for dominance and used both political and military means. It is likely that these paramilitary groups were willing to sacrifice a peaceful solution to the conflict in order to attain political dominance in Bosnia and Croatia. First, they expanded their political and military activity outside of Croatia. Their active pursuit of their territorial desires in Bosnia contributed to the prolongation of the conflict by adding more rivals to power in Bosnia. Second, by resorting to military means to settle their differences while fighting other enemies, the HOS and HVO demonstrated their willingness to forego a peaceful settlement to the crisis in order to remain in power. Finally, they used military force to achieve their political objectives rather the power of persuasion to convince people of the validity of their vision. In Croatia, the two parties did not clash militarily though President Franjo Tudjman feared that Dobroslav Paraga, the leader of the HOS, would lead an open rebellion against him after Tudjman handed over weapons to the JNA to appease international critics. To allay those fears, he arrested and jailed Paraga after the fall of Vukovar in November 1991.<sup>54</sup>

First, the HDZ and HSP expanded their political and military activity outside of Croatia. They both opened up party offices and established paramilitary units in Bosnia to garner the support of the Bosnian Croats for their respective visions of the future of Croatia and Bosnia. Dobroslav Paraga was an ultra-nationalist Croatian parliamentarian who, with financial backing of Croatian émigrés, raised an army of several thousand soldiers as the armed wing of his

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<sup>53</sup>Moore, "Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia: Outrage by Little Action," 2-3.

<sup>54</sup>Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 186.

Croatian Party of Rights (HSP).<sup>55</sup> This paramilitary force was the Croatian Defense Council (HOS). The HSP espoused the idea of a greater Croatia that included all of Bosnia and parts of Serbia (Figure 3). The party itself used symbols reflecting the pro-Nazi Ustaša regime in Croatia during World War II, which further stoked the fear and resentment of the Serbs.<sup>56</sup> The HSP's goal was to create a homogenous state through military action and extend Croatia's borders.<sup>57</sup> Paraga had spent time in prison in the 1980s for his advocating for an independent Croatia. Interestingly enough, other leaders during the Yugoslav wars also spent time in prison in the 1980s for their radical beliefs: the Croatian President, Franjo Tudjman, the Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović, and the leader of the Chetnik paramilitary group Vojislav Šešelj. Paraga started the HSP in 1991 after a break with Tudjman's HDZ party. He felt that the HDZ was not looking out for Croatia's best interests.<sup>58</sup> In particular, he believed that Croatia should use military force against the Krajina Serbs to suppress their rebellion in Croatia and to expand its territory to include all of Bosnia (Figure 4). His ultra-nationalist platform opposed the division of Bosnia since it should be included in Croatia and supported the notion of a Croatian-Muslim alliance against the Serbs.<sup>59</sup> Paraga was able to use connections with the Croatian émigré population and other right-wing

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<sup>55</sup>Ray Moseley, "Croatian Extremist Spoiling for Wider War," *Chicago Tribune*, October 7, 1991, sec. News, [articles.chicagotribune.com/1991-10-07/news/9103310729\\_1\\_dobroslav-paraga-president-franjo-tudjman-croatian-national-guard](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1991-10-07/news/9103310729_1_dobroslav-paraga-president-franjo-tudjman-croatian-national-guard) (accessed October 6, 2013).

<sup>56</sup>Wilbur G. Landrey, "A Right-Wing Militia in Croatia Complicates Search for Peace," *St. Petersburg Times*, October 11, 1991, City edition, sec. National, <https://lumen.cgscarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/262842312?accountid=28992> (accessed November 18, 2013); Kitty McKinsey, "Croatian Campaigns with Third-Reich Salutes and Fascist Slogans," *The Gazette*, July 30, 1992, Final edition, sec. News, <https://lumen.cgscarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/432304729?accountid=28992> (accessed November 18, 2013).

<sup>57</sup>Kitty McKinsey, "Fascist Leader Complicates Croatian Election Campaign," *The Ottawa Citizen*, July 31, 1992, Final edition, sec. News, <https://lumen.cgscarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/239663182?accountid=28992> (accessed November 18, 2013).

<sup>58</sup>Andrej Gustincic, "Croatian Nationalist Once Fought Communists - Now Serbs," *Reuters*, October 10, 1991, [www.angelfire.com/in/beograd/hdb45.html](http://www.angelfire.com/in/beograd/hdb45.html) (accessed October 6, 2013).

<sup>59</sup>Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 197-198.

Croatian nationalists in Croatia and Bosnia to fund not only his political party but also the armed wing of the party.<sup>60</sup> The HOS would fight in Croatia against the JNA and Krajina Serbs (SVK)



Figure 3. Greater Croatia.

*Source: Created by author.*

alongside the Croatian army (HV), but it remained separate from the HV and would often “do its own thing.”<sup>61</sup> In 1992, Paraga ran against Tudjman in presidential elections but did not win. With a private army that was loyal to his cause, he remained steadfastly opposed to Tudjman’s apparent willingness to compromise with the Serbs, and Tudjman “was unable to force the Party of Rights to follow its official line, both regarding military operations and the agreement to a

<sup>60</sup>Paul Koring, “Canadian Defends Support for Private Croatian Army - Donations Used for Clothes and Food, Not Weapons,” *Toronto Globe and Mail*, September 25, 1991, [www.angelfire.com/in/beograd/hdb45.html](http://www.angelfire.com/in/beograd/hdb45.html) (accessed October 6, 2013).

<sup>61</sup>BBC Newsnight, “Croatian Right Gets Tough - HOS,” 1991, Youtube Web site, 9:26, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2TGl6f17CY> (accessed October 6, 2013).



ceasefire.”<sup>62</sup> He went on to found another right-wing political party after being subsequently replaced as the leader of the HSP in 1993. Before that occurred, he extended the HOS’s reach to Bosnia where it established a branch headed by Blaž Kraljević, an “outspoken proponents of a Croat-Muslim alliance, [who] stood in the way of the HDZ right's plans for a Croat-Muslim war.”<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Tudjman’s HDZ party started a paramilitary group that supported the HDZ party in Bosnia. This paramilitary group was called the Croatian Defense Council (HVO), “a well-armed, fifty-thousand strong force, [that] acted as the extended arm of Tudjman.”<sup>64</sup> It was not part of the formal command structure of the Bosnian government and existed to defend Croats in Bosnia.<sup>65</sup> While separate from the official Croatian army (HV), it was closely connected to it and received significant support from it. Just as Paraga split politically from Tudjman in Croatia, so too did the HSP and HDZ split in Bosnia and came to violent confrontation in the summer of 1992. Prior to the confrontation, Tudjman used his influence to replace Stjepan Kljuić, the head of the HDZ in Bosnia and a moderate who advocated for supporting Izetbegović and his vision for a united Bosnia, with a hard-line HDZ party member. His name was Mate Boban, a businessman who made a fortune supplying weapons to Croatia.<sup>66</sup> Under Boban, the HDZ party leaders declared an independent state called Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna on November 18, 1991, with the intention of ceding from Bosnia and joining

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<sup>62</sup>Koring, “Canadian Defends Support for Private Croatian Army - Donations Used for Clothes and Food, Not Weapons.”

<sup>63</sup>Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*, 162.

<sup>64</sup>Stipe Kikavica, “The Army’s Collapse,” in *Burn This House the Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia*, ed. Jasminka Udovički and James Ridgeway (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 147.

<sup>65</sup>Branka Magas and Ivo Zanic, eds., *The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1991-1995* (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001), 171.

<sup>66</sup>John F. Burns, “Croats Claim Their Own Slice of Bosnia,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 1992, sec. World, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/07/06/world/croats-claim-their-own-slice-of-bosnia.html?scp=9&sq=boban+bosnia&st=cse&pagewanted=all> (accessed November 14, 2013).

Croatia proper.<sup>67</sup> The majority of Croatian citizens in Croatia did not support this intention.<sup>68</sup> However, it was part of Tudjman's plan for taking over part of Bosnia, an idea with which Milošević agreed as part of his goal of taking a piece of Bosnia and uniting all Serbs under one country. Thus, both the HOS and the HVO extended their reach out of Croatia and into Bosnia, which set the stage for their eventual clash.

Second, by resorting to military means to settle their political differences while fighting other enemies, the HOS and HVO demonstrated their willingness to forego a peaceful settlement to the crisis in order to remain in power. The nature of the opposing platforms, which their political parties supported - taking over all of Bosnia or just a portion of it – left no room for compromise. Indeed, these two Croatian political parties used their paramilitary organizations in Bosnia to fight a proxy war for power and their vision of how to extend Croatia's control over Bosnia. Boban and the hardliners in the HDZ preferred to divide Croatia into three ethnic entities and annex the Croatian-dominated entity to Croatia.<sup>69</sup> This contrasted with the HSP's position of fighting the Serbs and keeping Bosnia whole to create a greater Croatia. On May 6, 1992, Mate Boban met with Radovan Karadžić, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, in Graz, Austria, where they agreed on a deal to stop fighting. Under this agreement, the two sides would divide Bosnia between the Croats and the Serbs and leave only a small territory in between for the Muslims.<sup>70</sup> Not only did this agreement upset the Muslims, who were not invited to the meeting, but it also further alienated the HOS since it did not conform to their idea of a united Bosnia under Croatian

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<sup>67</sup>(U.S.), *Balkan Battlegrounds*, 144; Burns, "Croats Claim Their Own Slice of Bosnia."

<sup>68</sup>Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1995), 199; Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*, 160.

<sup>69</sup>Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*. 106; Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 277.

<sup>70</sup>Andrejevich, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: In Search of Peace."

control. In addition, it complicated the peace process since the international community would not agree to a partition that did not at least involve the participation of the Muslims, who would be adversely affected, and “protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia.”<sup>71</sup>

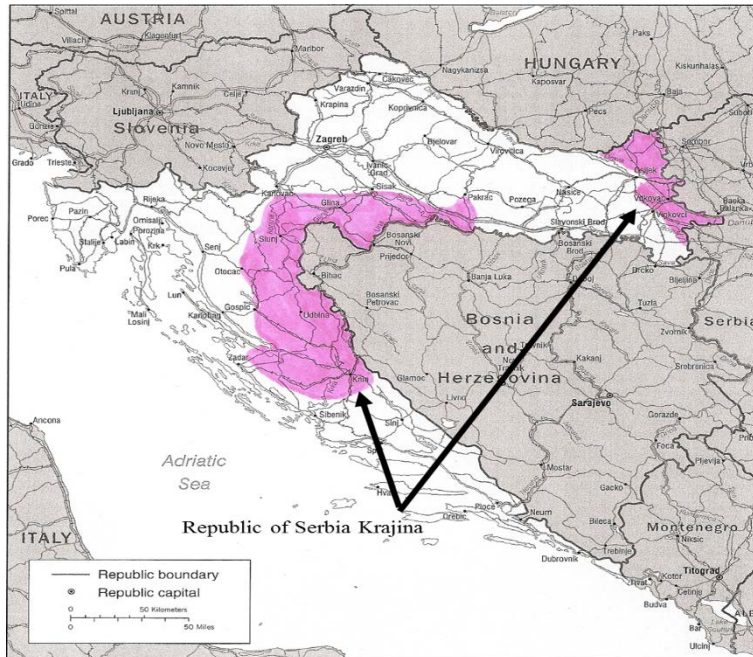


Figure 4. Republic of Serbia Krajina.

*Source: Created by author.*

Finally, these paramilitary groups used military force to achieve their political objectives rather than the power of persuasion to convince people of the validity of their vision. They openly fought each other in an attempt to gain a position of advantage in the pursuit of dictating the terms of any resolution to the conflict. Thus, a new conflict sprung up in the Yugoslav wars adding another obstacle to any peace negotiations. The HOS and HVO increased the level violence in Bosnia when they turned their guns on each other in the summer of 1992 after the Graz deal brokered between Boban and Karadžić. This agreement forced the HOS into a position

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<sup>71</sup>Blaine Harden, “Warring Factions Agree on Plan to Divide up Former Yugoslavia,” *The Tech*, May 8, 1992, <http://tech.mit.edu/V112/PDF/V112-N26.pdf> (accessed November 14, 2013).

of either having to defend its belief in an integral Bosnia or accept a new reality of a divided Bosnia. One month after the Graz agreement, the HOS attacked Trebinje in eastern Bosnia, which threatened the deal Boban made with the Bosnian Serbs. In retaliation, in August 1992, the HVO attacked and assassinated Blaž Kraljević and his men on their return from a meeting with HVO commanders in Mostar.<sup>72</sup> With its leader dead in Bosnia, the HOS soon dissolved, thus ending this rivalry and leaving the Tudjman administration in Zagreb to direct the HVO in support of his vision limiting Croatia's territorial claim in Bosnia. Though short lived, their struggle to dominate the direction of Croatia's policy towards Bosnia added to the violence in Bosnia, further diminished the viability of political dialogue to settle differences in this region, and complicated the ongoing peace talks with their divergent objectives.

#### Vojislav Šešelj and the Chetniks

In Serbia as in Croatia, paramilitaries took part in the struggle for political power that would ultimately establish the territorial boundaries of the country. One paramilitary leader, Vojislav Šešelj, an ultra-national Serbian politician and leader of the Chetnik paramilitary group, also called Šešeljovi (Šešelj's men), used both violence and propaganda to stir up ethnic animosities and advance his ultranationalist agenda of an ethnically pure greater Serbia (Figure 5).<sup>73</sup> Eventually, he challenged Slobodan Milošević for control of the Serbian government and the continuation of the war once it became apparent that Milošević was ready to consolidate gains already made and negotiate a peace deal. It is probable that this paramilitary leader's actions intensified the conflict and delayed a peaceful resolution to the conflict. First, Šešelj's paramilitary group was among the first groups to be involved in the fighting in Croatia and

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<sup>72</sup>Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell*. 61-62, 214-215; Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*, 3rd ed. (New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Penguin Books, 1996), 195-199.

<sup>73</sup>"Killing Happened 'Wherever Seselj' Was," *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, March 7, 2012, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/926561744?accountid=28992> (accessed November 6, 2013).

Bosnia.<sup>74</sup> He sent his men into villages and towns to help local Serbs set up and man check points and harass the Croats and Muslims. Second, he actively expanded his activities throughout Croatia and Bosnia in support of Serbian interests. In both republics, he used his paramilitary groups to support hardline Serb local politicians in Croatia and Bosnia to incite violence between the ethnic groups.<sup>75</sup> Finally, he broke with Milošević when he signaled his acceptance of a peace deal that did not appeal to Šešelj. This break up demonstrated that the Serbian leadership did not have coherent, unified objective, which made negotiations to end the fighting difficult. To begin, Šešelj's extreme political views developed over time from his student days when he wrote his doctoral theses that "dealt with "The Essence of Fascism and Militarism"; the other discussed the nation-in-arms concept as the basis of Marxist defense strategy."<sup>76</sup> In 1989, he received the ceremonial title of Chetnik Vojvoda (Duke) from Momčilo Đujić, a World War II Chetnik leader and Serbian priest living California, which Šešelj believed supported his claim of being the defender of Serbs.<sup>77</sup> In 1990, he became involved in several ultranationalist political parties: the Serbian Freedom Movement, the Serbian Renewal Movement, and the Serbian National Renewal Party (later renamed the Serbian Chetnik Movement).<sup>78</sup> Šešelj curried favor and financial support

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<sup>74</sup>Doder and Branson, *Milosevic*, 117.

<sup>75</sup>Carol J. Williams, "NEWS ANALYSIS Strongman Milosevic Tightening Grip on Emerging 'Greater Serbia' Balkans: The Henchmen of Seselj, His Turncoat Lieutenant, Are Being Arrested and Accused of Heinous Crimes.," *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1993, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/282172252?accountid=28992> (accessed November 6, 2013).

<sup>76</sup>Dusko Doder, "Nationalist Serb Moves from Fringe to Seat of Power Radical Could One Day Rule Yugoslavia," *The Sun*, January 11, 1993, Final Edition, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/406769920?accountid=28992> (accessed November 6, 2013).

<sup>77</sup>*Foreign Broadcast Information Service Eastern Europe Daily Reports*, August 5, 1991, 52; David Binder, "Momcilo Djujic, Serbian Priest and Warrior, Dies at 92," *The New York Times*, September 13, 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/13/world/momcilo-djujic-serbian-priest-and-warrior-dies-at-92.html> (accessed March 2, 2014).

<sup>78</sup>*Trial Transcripts for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia IT-03-67 Šešelj* (The Hague, the Netherlands: International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, 2003), <http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/trans/en/030226IA.htm> (accessed January 23, 2014), 7-9.

from Serbian emigrants to “support his nationalistic activities” and finance his political party and paramilitary force.<sup>79</sup> He ran for president of Serbia in 1990 under the Serbian Freedom Movement party, finishing fourth in fourth place, and founded the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) in 1991, the party under which he was elected to parliament in Belgrade.<sup>80</sup> He also led the paramilitary group, Chetniks, and, reportedly, others such as the White Eagles (Beli Orlovi). Altogether, his paramilitary group numbered about 8,000 men. In an interview with *Der Spiegel*, Šešelj admitted that he alone controlled his Chetniks, which means that they directly supported his political agenda of creating an ethnically pure Serbia.<sup>81</sup> Šešelj’s paramilitary group was among the first groups to take part in the fighting in Croatia and Bosnia and operated in thirty-four counties in Croatia, Bosnia and elsewhere in Yugoslavia.<sup>82</sup> Šešelj started using his paramilitary organization to implement his greater Serbia plan in 1991 when he sent his men to Croatia to support Serb nationalists who were advocating for separation from Croatia. His paramilitary units took part in the opening skirmishes in Borovo Selo in May 1991, when local Serbs, with the support of Serbian paramilitaries, ambushed four policemen who were attempting to place a Croatian flag in the town.<sup>83</sup> Later, his men were reportedly involved in an uprising in Knin in August 1991, when Croatian police units attempted to stop the Serb nationalists in Knin from holding a referendum

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Doder, “Nationalist Serb Moves from Fringe to Seat of Power Radical Could One Day Rule Yugoslavia.”

<sup>81</sup>Tim Judah and Dessa Trevisan, “Nationalist Leader Demands Creation of Greater Serbia; Vojislav Seselj,” *The Times*, December 26, 1992, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/317877444?accountid=28992> (accessed November 6, 2013); *FBIS-EEU*, August 5, 1991.

<sup>82</sup>*Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to the Security Council Resolution 780 (1992)*, 1994. Annex III, 18-22.

<sup>83</sup>Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 141-142.

on independence.<sup>84</sup> From August to November 1991 in the battle for Vukovar - the opening battle in the war in Croatia - Šešelj's paramilitaries took part in the fighting along with regular JNA army units and other Serb paramilitary groups. The JNA was having a difficult time against the Croats and in mobilizing its reservists, many of whom hid or fled to other countries. To make up for the shortfall of men, it used "volunteer units...[that] came primarily from Serbian nationalist political parties and clubs."<sup>85</sup> Thus, Šešelj's paramilitary groups – and Šešelj in particular – provoked conflict in unstable areas of Croatia, fought in skirmishes and battles both before and at the start of the war in Croatia, and promoted a nationalist agenda that did not tolerate other ethnic groups.

Second, Šešelj actively expanded his activities throughout Croatia and Bosnia in support of Serbian interests without regard to a negotiated settlement that did not include all of his territorial demands. His political party had 80 committees in cities throughout Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo that recruited members and promoted racist agendas in support of his vision of greater Serbia. Šešelj personally directed his paramilitary unit and sent them to areas to provoke conflict, defend Serb communities, encourage the radicalization of local Serbs, and cleanse the areas of other ethnic groups.<sup>86</sup> For example, on March 2, 1992, two days after the Muslims and Croats held a referendum on the independence of Bosnia, Šešelj's men mobilized near and prepared to attack Sarajevo and later took part in the siege of the city.<sup>87</sup> In another incident, on

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<sup>84</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, 2005, 84-85.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 100.

<sup>86</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 18-22; *FBIS-EEU*, August 5, 1991; Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*, 105.

<sup>87</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 108-109.

April 8, 1992, two days after the European Community and the U.S. recognized the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent country, Šešelj's men took part in the attack on Zvornik northern Bosnia to continue the Serbs' territorial control in contradiction to the West's recognition of this area as belonging to the new country.<sup>88</sup> By expanding his paramilitary activities outside of Serbia proper, Šešelj built up his power base and political influence, attracted adherents to his vision for Serbia, and defied attempts at finding a peaceful, negotiated settlement. Finally, Šešelj broke with Milošević when the latter signaled his acceptance of a peace deal that did not appeal to Šešelj. He used his alliance with Milošević to advance his political objectives through violence prosecuted by his paramilitary units. When Milošević was no longer useful to him, Šešelj sought to undermine his power to continue to advance his nationalist agenda. Šešelj and Milošević were not always at odds, but each used the other to advance their visions of the future for Serbia and the Serbs. To this effect, Šešelj and his party formed an alliance with Milošević and his SPS party in 1992.<sup>89</sup> Through this alliance, Milošević gained the support of militant nationalists in his quest to create a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia, while Šešelj gained a prominent political ally and support to carry out his vision of greater Serbia. The difference between the two lay in their territorial delimitations of this entity. Milošević wanted to expand the borders of Serbia to include various areas in Croatia and Bosnia where Serbs were in the majority, but he was willing to limit his expansion plans and solidify his gains once the Serbs had

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<sup>88</sup> Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 222; *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 84.

<sup>89</sup> *Final Report of the Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to the Security Council Resolution 780 (1992)*, 1994. Annex III, 20.





Figure 5. Greater Serbia.

*Source: Created by author.*

taken over a large swath of Bosnia and Croatia. Šešelj was unwilling to limit his territorial objectives. For him, greater Serbia extended along the Karlobag-Ogulin-Karlovac-Virovitica line, a territory that would include almost all Serbs in the Balkans, would eliminate Bosnia and Macedonia as independent republics, and drastically reduce the size of Croatia.<sup>90</sup> Another difference between the two men related to tolerance of other ethnic groups. While Milošević wanted a majority of Serbs under one country where minority ethnic groups could live, Šešelj sought out an ethnically pure state and used his paramilitary forces to ethnically cleanse large swaths of territory. In his pursuit of his goals, Šešelj hindered a political solution to the breakup of Yugoslavia since his goal did not tolerate any compromise. In 1993, Milošević, wishing to

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<sup>90</sup>Mark Thompson, *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 196.

consolidate the territory that the Serbs held, decrease the chances of a military intervention by the U.S., and remove the international sanctions that was debilitating Serbia's economy, seemed ready to end to the war along the lines advocated in the Vance-Owen peace plan.<sup>91</sup> In contrast, Šešelj advocated for a greater Serbia that included all of Bosnia and more without compromise. He had indicated his opposition to Milošević as early as August 1991 when he stated he would arrest Milošević if Šešelj were ever to come to power and struck when he felt he no longer needed Milošević.<sup>92</sup> In October 1993, Šešelj advanced a no-confidence vote in parliament against Milošević's government as a means to block Milošević's willingness to negotiate a peace deal that stopped short of creating greater Serbia. Milošević was under pressure domestically as Serbia's economy collapsed because of mismanagement and international sanctions. By November 1993, the inflation rate in Serbia was running at 20,000 percent, thereby making the local currency worthless and living conditions impossible for most of the population.<sup>93</sup> His goal, therefore, was to get the sanctions lifted by agreeing to a peace agreement that would end the war with solid territorial gains for Serbia. To accomplish, he was willing to sacrifice the radical Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. By doing so, he would be able to negotiate with the international community, declare success in uniting Serbs under one nation, quell domestic opposition, and remain in power. Šešelj, however, opposed negotiations and decided it was time to strike a blow against the Milošević government. He accused the Milošević regime of "trying to sell out the rump Yugoslavia's national interests by seeking to enter into discussions with the international community aimed at bringing peace to war-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina."<sup>94</sup> As it turned out,

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<sup>91</sup>Cohen, *Broken Bonds*, 249-250.

<sup>92</sup>*Foreign Broadcast Information Service Eastern Europe Daily Reports*, August 5, 1991, 53.

<sup>93</sup>Stan Markotich, "Serbia Prepares for Elections," *RFE/RL Research Report* 2, no. 49 (December 10, 1991): 15-20.

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid*, 15.

Milošević began arresting Šešelj's men and accusing Šešelj of war crimes as a way to deflect any blame away from him and crush any rival to his power.<sup>95</sup> By attempting to undermine Milošević who had an acceptable peace deal before him, Šešelj made a grab for power in an attempt to reject the negotiations and prolong the conflict to meet his own objectives.

## PARAMILITARIES AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Paramilitary organizations used the war to enrich themselves through the control of black markets, aid delivery, or simple robbery in the towns they controlled.<sup>96</sup> Because this was such a lucrative activity, it is possible that they desired to delay the peace process in order to continue to enrich themselves as long as possible. Paramilitary groups used the justification of their war efforts to take what they felt they deserved, used their connections with political leaders to gain legitimacy to their illegal activities, or used the cover of ethnic violence to provoke a response that kept the war going while they continued to take property from others. In Bosnia, for example, the Croats, Serbs, and Muslims often halted fighting to take care of business deals and collaborated to keep a stranglehold on Sarajevo to profit from illegal trading. One faction of the Croatian HVO "enjoyed a warm relationship with the Serb besiegers, via whom they fed and milked the thriving black-market in Sarajevo at the expense of the citizenry. Criminal elements within the ARBiH too may have collaborated in maintaining the siege so as to profit from the resulting black market."<sup>97</sup> While causing unimaginable suffering, inflicting long-lasting physical

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<sup>95</sup>Edgar O'Ballance, *Civil War in Bosnia, 1992-94* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 223-224.

<sup>96</sup>John E. Mueller, *The Remnants of War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 89-90; Marina Ilic, "Patriotism with Benefits: Paramilitary Groups, Weekend Warriors and Volunteers in Yugoslav Wars," in *The Wages of Nationhood: Conflicts, Compromises, and Costs*, n.d., 1.

<sup>97</sup>Marko Attila Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed* (London: Saqi Books in association with the Bosnian Institute, 2004), 74.

destruction in the region, and disrupting economic activity for many years, the war provided opportunities for people to enrich themselves by buying, selling, trading goods that were in short supply due to the interruption of regular commerce. From the political leaders who were “trying to defend vested interests” to ordinary people who were “driven by fear, need, or greed”, some people profited from war.<sup>98</sup> Three paramilitaries demonstrate how paramilitary groups took advantage of the conflict to materially profit: Juka’s Army, Caco’s men, and Arkan’s Tigers.

### Juka’s Wolves Prowl Sarajevo

Jusuf “Juka” Prazina used the war to enrich himself and his private army, known as Juka’s Wolves, because he felt he deserved it for having defended Sarajevo from the Serbs. “As a self-administered reward for bravery, police sources say, Juka’s Wolves have helped themselves to the inventories of many stores and warehouses.”<sup>99</sup> It is possible that this paramilitary leader’s actions delayed a peaceful resolution to the conflict. First, he maintained or expanded his control of the black market in Sarajevo. Instead of fighting to win the peace, Juka fought to protect his turf. Second, he forced Izetbegović to give him position of authority in the Bosnian armed forces. This official appointment gave him legitimate political cover to continue his illegal activities. Finally, he switched allegiances in the middle of the war to regain a position of influence after he fell out of favor with the Bosnian government. This switching of sides demonstrated that he had ulterior motives for fighting in defense of Sarajevo.

First, Juka fought to maintain or expand his control of the black market in Sarajevo rather

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<sup>98</sup>David Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*, Adelphi Series 320 (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998), 12.

<sup>99</sup>Blaine Harden, “Juka’s Wolves’ Prowl Sarajevo Streets for Serbs, Untended Merchandise,” *The Washington Post*, September 18, 1992, Pre-1997 Fulltext edition, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/307534441?accountid=28992> (accessed September 22, 2013).

than to win the peace. His group was instrumental in defending Sarajevo from Bosnian Serbs after they attacked the city in 1992 since the Bosnian government at the time did not have an army. However, as the conflict continued, Juka's men looted and robbed the people who remained in the city.<sup>100</sup> Juka himself was a small time criminal involved in the local mafia in Sarajevo before the war started.<sup>101</sup> His pre-war occupation as a debt collector provided him with a group of approximately 300-armed men who formed his private army and readily took up arms to defend Sarajevo when the Serb forces attacked in 1992.<sup>102</sup> Because of his close ties to the political leadership and his partaking in the successful defense of Sarajevo in 1992, Juka gained celebrity status in Bosnia and rose above the law.<sup>103</sup> His group committed a number of crimes including killing and raping civilians, theft, and destruction of property. Reports indicate that he "never stopped racketeering; throughout the siege of Sarajevo, Juka reportedly controlled the black market."<sup>104</sup> He traded with Croatian and Serbian forces surrounding Sarajevo and

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<sup>100</sup>John Pomfret, "The War Gives Authority to Criminals; Juka Has His Small Army in Bosnia. 'It's a Hard Life; Taking the Law into Your Own Hands,' He Says," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 22, 1992, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/286535611?accountid=28992>. (accessed September 22, 2013); Vesna Peric-Zimonjic Analysis, "Criminals Given a Free Hand in the Balkan Wars," *Inter Press Service*, February 26, 1998, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/446073120?accountid=28992> (accessed September 22, 2013).

<sup>101</sup>Harden, "Juka's Wolves' Prowl Sarajevo Streets for Serbs, Untended Merchandise"; Pomfret, "The War Gives Authority to Criminals; Juka Has His Small Army in Bosnia. 'It's a Hard Life; Taking the Law into Your Own Hands,' He Says."; Reuters News Service 1992, "Robin Hood-Like Hero Emerges From Bosnia: [3\* Edition]," *St. Louis Post - Dispatch (pre-1997 Fulltext)*, August 30, 1992, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/303605947?accountid=28992> (accessed September 22, 2013); John E. Mueller, *The Remnants of War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 90.

<sup>102</sup>"Juka of Sarajevo," *Transitions Online*, January 10, 1994, [www.tol.org/client/article/15559-juka-of-sarajevo.html?print](http://www.tol.org/client/article/15559-juka-of-sarajevo.html?print) (accessed October 29, 2013).

<sup>103</sup>Pomfret, "The War Gives Authority to Criminals; Juka Has His Small Army in Bosnia. 'It's a Hard Life; Taking the Law into Your Own Hands,' He Says."; Reuters News Service, "Robin Hood-Like Hero Emerges From Bosnia: [3\* Edition]."

<sup>104</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 16.

controlled the passage of goods and people through the checkpoints that his men controlled.<sup>105</sup> By operating a trading relationship with his enemies, Juka demonstrated that his motivation for defending Sarajevo became more economic than military as he sought to protect his share of the Sarajevo black market. Second, Juka forced Izetbegović to give him position of authority in the Bosnian armed forces. In June 1992, Izetbegović appointed him commander of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) Special Forces after his group surrounded the president's building.<sup>106</sup> This effectively gave him the legitimacy to do whatever he wanted in Sarajevo since he could justify any robbery, killing, or other acts of violence as being government business. Juka operated his group as his own army apart from the Bosnian Army and held no loyalty to the Bosnian government.<sup>107</sup> Although officially part of the army, he and his men still "looked and acted like irregular forces," as demonstrated by their continued criminal activities.<sup>108</sup> Finally, he switched allegiances in the middle of the war to regain a position of influence after he fell out of favor with the Bosnian government. He clashed with the Bosnian Army leaders on several occasions, and in 1993, he fled Sarajevo and joined the Croatian HVO to fight against the Muslims.<sup>109</sup> His return to prominence did not work out as intended, and unknown assailants - possibly a paramilitary group under the SDA called the Larks (ševe) - assassinated him in Belgium at the end of 1993.<sup>110</sup> Through his actions, Juka demonstrated that he was more interested in profiting from the siege of

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<sup>105</sup> Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets*, 66-68.

<sup>106</sup> "Juka of Sarajevo."

<sup>107</sup> Pomfret, "The War Gives Authority to Criminals; Juka Has His Small Army in Bosnia. 'It's a Hard Life; Taking the Law into Your Own Hands,' He Says."

<sup>108</sup> Reuters News Service, "Robin Hood-Like Hero Emerges From Bosnia: [3\* Edition]"; Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed*, 2004, 74-75.

<sup>109</sup> Andrew Hogg, "Robin Hood Hero Turns Enemy in the Hell of Siege City; Bosnia," *The Times*, May 16, 1993, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/317965203?accountid=28992> (September 24, 2013).

<sup>110</sup> "Juka of Sarajevo"; Schindler, *Unholy Terror*, 171-175.

Sarajevo rather than trying to resolve the conflict through military or other means. Because of the siege, Juka's paramilitary group was able to gain a position of authority in the Bosnian government and maintain their hold on the black market. After fleeing Sarajevo, Juka joined his enemies in an attempt to regain his lost position of influence and profit.

### Caco Rules in Sarajevo

Another paramilitary leader who used the war to enrich himself was Mušan "Caco" Topalović, a petty criminal and singer in a band in Sarajevo prior to the breakup of Yugoslavia.<sup>111</sup> It is possible that this paramilitary leader's actions delayed a peaceful resolution to the conflict. First, he took advantage of the political cover he had from President Izetbegović to maintain his control of the Sarajevo black market. This meant that he profited from the lawlessness that the war caused. Second, he abused the citizens he was supposed to protect rather than fighting to protect them. Third, he fought against the Bosnian Army and police to maintain his position of authority that granted legitimacy to his black market activities.

First, he took advantage of the political cover he had from President Izetbegović to expand his control of the Sarajevo black market. Like Juka, he played a critical role in defending Sarajevo from the Bosnian Serbs, especially in 1992 when the Bosnian government did not have an army to defend itself. Instead, Sarajevo's criminal groups organized the defense of the city since they had both men and guns. Caco was close to Izetbegović and became commander of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Brigade in the Bosnian Army.<sup>112</sup> While formerly under military command, Caco continued to use the men in his units as his private army to support his criminal activities and maintain his control over his share of the black market.<sup>113</sup> His profit-making motives juxtaposed

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<sup>111</sup>Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell*, 315; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, 131.

<sup>112</sup>Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed*, 2004, 75.

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, 98-99.

with the Bosnian government's political motives. Instead, he preferred to keep the status quo whereby peace did not settle and the chaotic, lawless environment continued as long as he was profiting. Using his men as his private army to support his criminal empire in Sarajevo, he "paralyzed the functioning of state and legal bodies in the capital and carried out a reign of terror against civilians, particularly Serbs and Croats."<sup>114</sup> As long as the Izetbegović government turned a blind eye to the criminal activities of Caco and his men and was unable to control them, Caco's group would continue to defend Sarajevo from the Bosnian Serbs as well as their economic interests.<sup>115</sup> Second, he abused the citizens of Sarajevo he was supposed to protect. Caco's men often forced citizens into military service by rounding up young men to dig trenches on the front lines around Sarajevo.<sup>116</sup> This forced labor violated the right of civilians to remain neutral in the conflict, put them in harm's way, and imposed his authority over the affected population. The paramilitaries also extorted money from civilians to get out of trench-digging duties. In addition, Caco and his men murdered Serbian civilians and even Muslims from Sarajevo, no matter if they supported the Bosnian government against the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>117</sup> Stories and evidence came out after the war of how Caco's men tortured and murdered civilians, especially Serbs, during the war and buried them in a cave in Kazani on Mt. Trebević in Sarajevo.<sup>118</sup> Finally, in July 1993, he and

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>115</sup>Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*, 24; Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, 132.

<sup>116</sup>John F. Burns, "Renegades Help Bosnia by Helping Themselves," *The New York Times*, July 5, 1993, Late Edition (East Coast), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/429171584?accountid=28992> (accessed September 22, 2013). 1; Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets*, 92-93.

<sup>117</sup>Chris Hedges, "Postscript to Sarajevo's Anguish: Muslim Killings of Serbs Detailed," November 12, 1997, sec. Archives, <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/12/world/postscript-to-sarajevo-s-anguish-muslim-killings-of-serbs-detailed.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> (accessed January 28, 2014).

<sup>118</sup>Senad Pecanianin and Vildana Selimbegovic, *The Exclusive Truth about the Crimes of "Caco,"* Article (Toronto, Ont.: The Centre for Peace in the Balkans, June 1, 2000), <http://www.balkanpeace.org/index.php?index=article&articleid=10321> (accessed February 13, 2014);



his men attacked three Bosnian police stations after one of his men was arrested. Caco won after “seizing 30 officers and taking them off to dig trenches at the front-line positions held by Caco's men on Trebević Mountain.”<sup>119</sup> In an effort to professionalize the Bosnian Army's force of over 200,000 men, most volunteers, Izetbegović appointed Rasim Delić as its commander in June 1993. One of his first orders of business was to lead “a crackdown in October against the mafiosi leaders of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain brigades in Sarajevo.”<sup>120</sup> What ensued was Operation Trebević, an operation near Mount Igman on October 25, 1993, during which Caco surrendered to the Bosnian Army. A couple of days later, he was killed while trying to escape.<sup>121</sup> Izetbegović's ulterior motive was to bring the army and the paramilitary groups more firmly under his control to support his political goals.<sup>122</sup> In effect, what he achieved was the elimination of rivals for control of the armed forces and allowed him to unify the army under his control. To him, Caco was just another rival to his power. Being able to carry out his criminal activities with a relatively free hand, he effectively usurped the government's power to regulate the affairs of the nation and administer the rule of law. His actions weakened the government and thus did not enable it to search for a cohesive negotiated settlement with its counterparts. By removing Caco and others, Izetbegović “achieved in this way control of the Bosnian heartland as a militarily secure and politically stable national territory.”<sup>123</sup> By pursuing economic profits that came from the siege conditions, terrorizing the citizens he was supposed to protect, and combatting very

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Hedges, “Postscript to Sarajevo's Anguish: Muslim Killings of Serbs Detailed”; Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets*, 93.

<sup>119</sup>Burns, “Renegades Help Bosnia by Helping Themselves.”

<sup>120</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, 2005, 180.

<sup>121</sup>O'Ballance, *Civil War in Bosnia, 1992-94*, 222.

<sup>122</sup>Magas and Zanic, *The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1991-1995*, 190-191.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, 199.

government institutions that were trying to maintain order in the Sarajevo, Caco demonstrated that he was more interested in maintaining his hold on economic and political power rather than seeking to defeat the siege of Sarajevo and bringing the conflict to a resolution.

### Arkan's Tigers Roam Around

Željko “Arkan” Ražnatović, founder and leader of the paramilitary group, Serbian Volunteer Guard (a.k.a. Tigers), was another paramilitary leader who used the war to enrich himself. In addition to amassing wealth, he conducted extensive ethnic cleansing operations on behalf of the Serbian government. He was one of the most infamous of the paramilitary leaders in the Balkan wars and served in Croatia, Bosnia, and later Kosovo, before dying at the hands of an assassin in Belgrade in 2000. He was a known criminal before the war “wanted by Interpol for armed robbery and terrorist activity in Western Europe, a person widely suspected of having been a hit man for the state security service (UDBA) during the Tito years.”<sup>124</sup> He took advantage of the war situation to enrich himself for a comfortable life post-bellum. Not only did he amass a great deal of wealth, but he also became a celebrity and politician in Serbia. It is likely that this paramilitary leader's actions intensified the conflict and delayed a peaceful resolution to the conflict. First, Arkan's paramilitary group was among the first groups to be involved in fighting in both Croatia and Bosnia. By attacking towns and villages without being provoked, his group deliberately made it difficult for the different sides to resolve their differences peacefully. Second, he actively expanded his activities throughout Croatia and Bosnia in support of the Serbian breakaway republics in Croatia and Bosnia. This expansion kept the war from stopping and escalated the animosity between the warring groups from dissipating and allowed Arkan to continue profit from the war. Finally, he sought legitimacy by entering the political arena in

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<sup>124</sup>Jasminka Udovički and James Ridgeway, eds., *Burn This House the Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 117.

Serbia. This attempt to gain a position of leadership in the Serbian government demonstrated his desire to influence the political decisions that would keep war going for his advantage.

To begin, Arkan's paramilitary group was among the first groups to be involved in fighting in both Croatia and Bosnia on the Serbian side. His paramilitary group was one of the most feared groups in the wars. It moved from conflict to conflict, killing and looting as it moved. The members of the group were mainly his friends and members of the Belgrade-based Red Star soccer fan club, Delije, of which he was the leader.<sup>125</sup> Like Šešelj, Arkan became involved in the opening skirmishes in Croatia in 1990 that eventually led to open war. The Croatian police arrested Arkan on November 29, 1990 after he entered Croatia to help the breakaway Krajina Serbs prepare for war.<sup>126</sup> He received a sentence of 20 months in prison, but the Croatian government released him supposedly in exchange for a payment of one million deutsch marks from the Serbian government.<sup>127</sup> Soon after, his groups fought in the opening battle of Vukovar in Croatia followed by extensive service throughout Bosnia where his Tigers took part in the attack on Bijelina, Bosnia on April 1, 1992, one of the first towns to be targeted by the Bosnian Serbs. This attack was part of an effort to provoke the Bosnian Muslims into attacking the Bosnian Serbs in order to justify the Serb use of force to takeover this town.<sup>128</sup> The timing of this event was in anticipation of the European Community's recognition of Bosnia as an independent country on

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<sup>125</sup>Ivan Colovic, "Football, Hooligans and War," in *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, ed. Nebojša Popov and Drinka Gojković, trans. Central European University Press 2000 (Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Press, 2000), 373–396; Mueller, *The Remnants of War*, 90.

<sup>126</sup>CNN, "Arkan: Part 1 - Wanted," produced by Steve Daly and John Fielding, 1997, Documentary. [www.tol.org/client/article/17801-exclusive-cnn-documetary-on-arkan.html](http://www.tol.org/client/article/17801-exclusive-cnn-documetary-on-arkan.html) (accessed November 18, 2013).

<sup>127</sup>"Hrvatska za Arkana Dobila Milion Maraka," *Glas Javnosti*, January 17, 2000, <http://arhiva.glas-javnosti.rs/arhiva/2000/01/18/srpski/H00011704.shtm> (accessed February 12, 2014).

<sup>128</sup>Burg and Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 119-120.

April 6, 1992. This recognition, in turn, led the Bosnian Serbs to declare their independence and secession from Bosnia almost immediately, and the fighting spread throughout the country from that day forward.<sup>129</sup> Soon after, on April 8, 1992, Arkan's group attacked Zvornik where the Serbs declared their independent municipality, the Serbian Municipality of Zvornik, despite the population being sixty percent Muslim.<sup>130</sup> These unprovoked attacks helped to solidify the growing differences between the ethnic communities and intensify the conflict.

Second, Arkan actively expanded his activities throughout Croatia and Bosnia in support of the Serbian breakaway republics in Croatia and Bosnia. His paramilitary group operated in twenty-eight counties throughout Croatia, Bosnia, and other areas in Yugoslavia.<sup>131</sup> By actively supporting the fighting throughout Yugoslavia, Arkan was able to perpetuate the violence, which allowed him to loot at will. In addition to killing civilians, Arkan's group "ran cash and fuel to the Serb rebels in Croatia and Bosnia, sold smuggled gasoline and trafficked in drugs, black market foreign exchange, counterfeit currency and war booty."<sup>132</sup> He also received payments from local Serb leaders in communities in Croatia and Bosnia who specifically asked for Arkan's group to organize or take part in their fights. As one Bosnian Serb leader noted, "He is very expensive, but also very efficient."<sup>133</sup> Though Arkan had close ties with the Serbian government and received arms from the JNA, his group had to find a way to fund itself since it was not officially a part of

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<sup>129</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, 2005, 135-136.

<sup>130</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, 2002, 137.

<sup>131</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 18.

<sup>132</sup>R. T. Naylor, *Patriots and Profiteers: Economic Warfare, Embargo Busting, and State-Sponsored Crime*, Second (Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithica: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 360.

<sup>133</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 8.

the Serbian armed forces. For this, the men turned to illegal trade, looting, and ransoms.<sup>134</sup> Without war, the Tigers would not have been able to exist. Thus, the conflict provided both the ends and the means for them to fight. Even the JNA military acknowledged that the Tigers motivation for fighting was not in line with any of the political objectives being proffered but was one of looting and torture of the non-Serbs.<sup>135</sup> They sold the loot that they acquired in Croatia and Bosnia in Serbia where international sanctions severely restricted the supply of goods in the market.<sup>136</sup> With his increasing wealth, armed paramilitary group, and political cover through his connections in the Milošević regime, Arkan became one of the leaders of the criminal underworld in Belgrade and was able to leverage these attributes to support and spread the violenceBosnia

Finally, Arkan sought legitimacy by entering the political arena in Serbia. He used his celebrity status to enter into politics in 1992 when he was elected into parliament in Serbia as a deputy minister. On November 2, 1993, Arkan formed the Serbian Unity Party (SSJ), an ultra-nationalist party that advocated for a greater Serbia and intolerance for minorities.<sup>137</sup> At this time, Milošević was in a battle with Šešelj and needed someone to capture Šešelj's hardline supporters. So, he turned to Arkan, a well-known celebrity figure in Serbia who had the support of Serbian nationalists, and formed a coalition with him. His foray into a position of political leadership would offer him a way to influence the decisions being made on how and where to fight. Since he profited from the war, it is likely that he would continue supporting the war at the expense of a

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>136</sup>Mueller, *The Remnants of War*, 157; United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 26-27.

<sup>137</sup>Markotich, "Serbia Prepares for Elections," 17-18; Williams, "NEWS ANALYSIS Strongman Milosevic Tightening Grip on Emerging 'Greater Serbia' Balkans: The Henchmen of Seselj, His Turncoat Lieutenant, Are Being Arrested and Accused of Heinous Crimes."

peace deal. As it turned out, Milošević opted for a peace deal in Bosnia and Croatia in 1995 as the tide of war turned against the Serbs. He would continue his fight in Kosovo where Arkan and his group reappeared to continue their looting and killing.

## PARAMILITARIES AND THEIR IDEALS

Paramilitaries used the war to support causes other than political power or material gain. These groups and individuals were not interested in securing specific territorial boundaries, supporting a particular political party, or supporting the rights of a particular ethnic group. Instead, they fought for another motive altogether, whether it be personal glory, religious aspirations, or for the thrill of fighting.<sup>138</sup> This section will look at several paramilitary groups that fought primarily for reasons other than political or material gain to determine if their actions purposefully hindered a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in order that they may continue fighting to satisfy their motives. Three paramilitaries that demonstrate how paramilitary groups took advantage of the conflict to fulfill their personal ambitions include the foreign mujahedin, foreign mercenaries, and weekend warriors.

### Mujahedin in Bosnia

The appearance of foreign Muslim fighters, mujahedin, in Bosnia in 1992 only confirmed to Serbs and Croats the belief that President Izetbegović was trying to create an Islamic state, though he insisted that this was not the case.<sup>139</sup> Their presence might have

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<sup>138</sup>Udovički and Ridgeway, *Burn This House the Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia*, 141-142; Vivod, "In the Shadow of the Serbian Paramilitary Units: Narrative Patterns about the Role of Paramilitary Units in Former Yugoslav Conflict," 23-31.

<sup>139</sup>Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse*, 184; Silber and Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, 208; ICTY Communications Services, "The Prosecutor v. Enver Hadžihasanović and Amir Kubura" (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.), [http://www.icty.org/x/cases/hadzihasanovic\\_kubura/cis/en/cis\\_hadzihasanovic\\_kubura\\_en.pdf](http://www.icty.org/x/cases/hadzihasanovic_kubura/cis/en/cis_hadzihasanovic_kubura_en.pdf) (accessed September 30, 2013); Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, 173.

complicated the peace process because they fought for religious reasons rather than for political or monetary objectives, they sought to spread religious beliefs which further distanced the Muslims from the other ethnic groups and even the moderate Bosnian Muslims, and they fought by their own rules making it difficult for the Bosnian government to control them.<sup>140</sup>

First, they fought for religious conviction rather than for any political or monetary objectives.<sup>141</sup> Their purpose was to help their fellow Muslims, to defend their religion and to help create an Islamic state, though this was not the stated objective of the Bosnian government. Many of these fighters came from the war in Afghanistan and sought to continue the jihad, which they had fought there. Stories of atrocities being committed by the Christians (Serbs and Croats) against the Muslims in Bosnia enflamed their desire to participate in this “holy war.”<sup>142</sup> Estimates on how many Muslim fighters from Afghanistan, Iran, and elsewhere actually came to Bosnia range from several hundred to several thousand.<sup>143</sup> This uncertainty is because they arrived individually through unofficial channels, many posing as aid workers only to pick up arms and join the fighting, while many locals who became religious fundamentalist are lumped together with the foreigners as mujahedin. While Bosnian Muslims generally welcomed the assistance in fighting their enemies, they did not necessarily embrace the religious fundamentalism that these foreigners brought with them since they were more concerned with practical matters of protecting their families and property. The foreigners were culturally, linguistically, and outwardly different from their Bosnian counterparts and did not readily integrate with them. Some Bosnian leaders

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<sup>140</sup>Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell*, 259.

<sup>141</sup>Shaul Shay, *Islamic Terror and the Balkans* (Herzliya, Israel; New Brunswick, NJ: International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2009), 65-67.

<sup>142</sup>Schindler, *Unholy Terror*, 118.

<sup>143</sup>Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed*, 2004, 131.

did not want them in the country because the differences were too great.<sup>144</sup> Secondly, they sought to spread fundamental Islamic religious beliefs, which further distanced the Muslims from the other ethnic groups and even the moderate Bosnian Muslims. Their presence emphasized religious differences between the Croats, Serbs, and Muslims. The foreigners were “surprised to find that the local Muslims were fighting simply to protect their homes, not in a jihad.”<sup>145</sup> Their mere presence only further provoked the Serbs and Croats into continuing to fight, especially the Serbs who historically saw themselves as Europe’s last defense against the Muslim Turks.<sup>146</sup> This religious division added another layer of complexity to the peace process in that it confounded Western negotiators who were developing proposals that would be acceptable to all sides and created another dimension to the fight that had to be addressed during peace negotiations. Finally, they fought by their own rules making it difficult for the Bosnian government to control them. The mujahedin were not a disciplined organization, did not share a common strategic objective with the Bosnian Army, and acted independently outside of the army’s command and control.<sup>147</sup> In order to control them, the Bosnian government had to commit military and police forces to oversee them since they deemed them to be “a liability” and uninterested in the government’s objectives.<sup>148</sup> In addition, they had a different way of fighting. They used “violent and dangerous

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<sup>144</sup>Schindler, *Unholy Terror*, 127.

<sup>145</sup>Patrick Moore, “The London Conference on the Bosnian Crisis,” *RFE/RL Research Report* 1, no. 36 (September 11, 1992): 1–6.

<sup>146</sup>R. G. D. Laffan, *The Serbs: The Guardians of the Gate* (New York: Dorset Press, 1989), 24-25; Sabrina P. Ramet and Vjeran Pavlaković, eds., *Serbia since 1989: Politics and Society under Milošević and after* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2005), 138; Andreas, *Blue Helmets and Black Markets*, 98; Vamik D. Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 72-80.

<sup>147</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 8; Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed*, 2004, 131.

<sup>148</sup>Vulliamy, *Seasons in Hell*, 294.



behavior” that did not comply “with the most basic rules of international humanitarian law.”<sup>149</sup> Beheading enemies, terrorism, and forcing local Muslims to follow strict fundamentalist practices were not uncommon activities. The Bosnian Army attempted to organize these Mujahedin volunteers by bringing them underneath its formal command structure. On August 13, 1993, the Bosnian Army leaders formed the El Mujaheed detachment under the 7<sup>th</sup> Muslim Brigade of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps. This unit contained the foreign Muslims from Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other countries, as well as some local Bosnian radicals, and had a reputation as being the most violent of the jihadists.<sup>150</sup> The 7<sup>th</sup> Muslim Brigade itself was a unit comprised of individuals from Bosnia that followed a fundamentalist form of Islam and believed that it was fighting a religious war.<sup>151</sup>

There is no indication that the mujahedin objected to the final peace settlement or to any peace agreement in contradiction to their objective of creating a Muslim state. The Bosnian Army commanders had issues with controlling the foreigners, and the foreigners had issues with integrating with the local population. But, there is no indication that they actively sought to undermine the peace process, contravene any orders given to them, or continue to fight once the Dayton Peace Accords was signed. According to this agreement, all foreign fighters were to leave Bosnia by the end of January 1996.<sup>152</sup> Most of the Mujahedin did leave, though some stayed behind. The motivation to remain was not to continue the war against the Serbs and Croats. Rather, it was either to settle down in Bosnia or, for some extremists, to fight the western nations

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<sup>149</sup>ICTY Communications Services, “Prosecutor v. Enver Hadžihasanović and Amir Kubura,” 9.

<sup>150</sup>Schindler, *Unholy Terror*, 164-165.

<sup>151</sup>Hoare, *How Bosnia Armed*, 2004, 107.

<sup>152</sup>United Nations Security Council, “General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” November 21, 1995, [http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA\\_951121\\_DaytonAgreement.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA_951121_DaytonAgreement.pdf) (accessed February 4, 2014).

from this base in Europe.<sup>153</sup>

### Mercenaries Find Employment

In addition to religious idealists, the conflicts in Yugoslavia attracted mercenaries who joined different paramilitary groups for money. While they may have had a proclivity for one side or the other, they were fighting to be paid. The wars provided ample opportunities for mercenaries to sell their services to the many factions. The Serbian Army had a shortage of men, as previously noted, while the nascent breakaway regions and paramilitary groups needed both men and, more importantly, experts to train the men they had. At the same time, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many eastern Europeans were looking for work and decided to fight as hired hands in the Balkan wars. Three examples of mercenaries at work in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia include émigrés fighting for patriotic duty, Russians looking for work after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and Western military advisors plying their trade.<sup>154</sup> First, one émigré who fought on the side of the Krajina Serbs was Dragan Vasiljković, a.k.a. Daniel Sneden, a.k.a. Captain Dragan. He was an Australian citizen who was born in Serbia. He had spent four years in the Australian Army reserves and worked as a military advisor in Africa before heading to the Balkans to support the Serbian cause. In Croatia, he established a training camp in Knin, Croatia, where he trained special operations forces in support of the Krajina and Bosnian Serbs. In

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<sup>153</sup> Associated Press, "NATO Forces Seize Terrorist Training Camp in Bosnia," *USA Today*, February 17, 1996, <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/index/bosnia/feb96/nbos156.htm> (accessed November 24, 2013).

<sup>154</sup> Carol J. Williams, "Cold Cash Fuels Russian Fighting Spirit in Bosnia Mercenaries: Some Battling alongside Rebel Serbs Are Ex-Soldiers. But Many Simply Needed a Job," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1993, Home edition, sec. Part-A; Foreign Desk, <https://lumen.cgscarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/281983540?accountid=28992> (accessed November 24, 2013); Janusz Bugajski, "Yugoslav Wars a Godsend for Hired Guns Inspired by Patriotism, Money or Adventure, Several Thousand Mercenaries and Volunteers Fight on All Sides," *Toronto Star*, April 10, 1993, SA2 edition, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/436830604?accountid=28992> (accessed November 24, 2013).

addition to training men, he commanded the paramilitary groups Knindze, Red Berets, and Muja. His exploits led him to become a hero and celebrity in Belgrade.<sup>155</sup> Second, Russian mercenaries (kontraktniki) came to the Balkans in search of employment after the collapse of the Soviet Union. They mainly fought on the side of the Serbs since they were culturally similar and historically friends.<sup>156</sup> With the Cold War over and the Russian economy in shambles, these mercenaries could find work in the war and get paid \$25 - \$155 a month.<sup>157</sup> An unknown number of Russians fought though the UN puts it at only one hundred and fifty.<sup>158</sup> They had war-fighting experience and were able to assimilate quickly into existing organizations since many of the weapons systems were Russian and their language and culture were similar to that of the Serbs.<sup>159</sup> Finally, Western military advisors participated on the different sides whether out of a sense of patriotic duty, to ply their trade, or to experience combat. Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Serbs used military advisors to train their troops on tactics, to organize their men into disciplined units, and to provide leadership training to local commanders. In letters to the UN in 1995 in response

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<sup>155</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 52; "Captain Dragan," Documentary, *Foreign Correspondent* (Australia: ABC News, September 28, 2010), <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2010/s3024201.htm> (accessed November 24, 2013).

<sup>156</sup>James Gow, "One Year of War in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *RFE/RL Research Report* 2, no. Number 23 (June 4, 1993): 1–13; United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 85.

<sup>157</sup>Bugajski, "Yugoslav Wars a Godsend for Hired Guns Inspired by Patriotism, Money or Adventure, Several Thousand Mercenaries and Volunteers Fight on All Sides"; Williams, "Cold Cash Fuels Russian Fighting Spirit in Bosnia Mercenaries: Some Battling alongside Rebel Serbs Are Ex-Soldiers. But Many Simply Needed a Job."

<sup>158</sup>United Nations Commission of Experts, *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), Annex III.A Special Forces*, 85.

<sup>159</sup>Tom Squitieri, "In Bosnia, a 'Volunteer' War Outsiders Send Arms and Soldiers," *USA Today* (pre-1997 Fulltext), June 19, 1995, Final edition, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/306724909?accountid=28992> (accessed November 21, 2013).

to the question of the use of mercenaries on the battlefield, the Croatian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia both acknowledge the use of foreign fighters by all sides in the conflict, and that many held leadership positions in various units.<sup>160</sup> Current and former members of foreign armies traveled to the Balkans to advise their chosen sides. One group of British soldiers called themselves the International Brigade or Dogs of War and trained and fought with military units in both Croatia and Bosnia.<sup>161</sup> Considering that these mercenaries fought for other than political objectives, were few in number, and incorporated themselves into existing military forces, both paramilitary and conventional armies, it is likely that they, by themselves, did not affect the peace negotiations in any direct way.

### Thrill Seekers and Weekend Warriors

The wars attracted individuals from different parts of the world who fought for personal reasons. They fought for personal glory to better their social standing, for the thrill of fighting, or for some ideal or sense of righteousness. For those fighting as an escape from poor social standing, an insecure economic situation, or an unstable family life, the paramilitary group offered a way for them to belong, to acquire loot to keep or sell, and to rise in social stature as they became heroes for fighting for their country.<sup>162</sup> Still others were weekend warriors who

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<sup>160</sup>Mate Granic and Miroslav Milosevic, "Letters on the Question of the Use of Mercenaries," August 29, 1995, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/50/plenary/a50-390add1.htm> (accessed January 26, 2014).

<sup>161</sup>Ian Traynor and Maggie O'Kane, "British Mercenaries Killed," *The Guardian (pre-1997 Fulltext)*, February 9, 1993, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/293474847?accountid=28992> (accessed January 30, 2014); *Inside Story - Dogs of War*. 1992. Documentary, History (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1992), [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3343x\\_ywy\\_M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3343x_ywy_M) (accessed January 30, 2014).

<sup>162</sup>Marina Ilic, "Patriotism with Benefits: Paramilitary Groups, Weekend Warriors and Volunteers in Yugoslav Wars," in *The Wages of Nationhood: Conflicts, Compromises, and Costs*, n.d.; Nebojša Popov and Drinka Gojković, eds., *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, trans. Central European

fought part-time for the thrill of fighting. It was easy, for example, for Serbs or Montenegrins to cross into Bosnia, take part in a raid or battle, steal some goods to sell on the black market, and then return home to their families and normal jobs.<sup>163</sup> Even foreigners participated in the war for the adventure. An ex-Belgian paratrooper, for example, joined the Bosnian Croats for the thrill of fighting.<sup>164</sup> Though he found the adrenalin rush he sought in battle, he also became disillusioned with the war after being wounded and suffering hardships and deprivations while in Bosnia. Another group, the Fish Head Gang, a group of about 50 men in Bosnia, existed to plunder aid convoys on one of the major routes between Gornji Vakuf and Novi Travnik. Under their leader, “Colonel” Paraga, this group’s activities forced aid convoys to travel with armed escorts, which slowed down aid delivery in central Bosnia.<sup>165</sup> Finally, the war attracted paramilitaries who fought to support ideas espoused by one side or the other. For example, the HOS in Croatia attracted neo-Nazis from other countries because of its radical rhetoric and historical association with the Ustaša, a World War II-era Croatian fascist group.<sup>166</sup> Whatever their motivations, men

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University Press 2000 (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 1996), 394-395; Bennett, *Yugoslavia’s Bloody Collapse*, 164.

<sup>163</sup>Ilic, “Patriotism with Benefits: Paramilitary Groups, Weekend Warriors and Volunteers in Yugoslav Wars”; Udovički and Ridgeway, *Burn This House the Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia*; Mueller, 141-146; *The Remnants of War*, 90.

<sup>164</sup>David Crary, “Mercenary in Bosnia Becomes Soldier of Misfortune,” *St. Louis Post - Dispatch (pre-1997 Fulltext)*, August 8, 1993, Five Star edition, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/303673261?accountid=28992> (accessed November 21, 2013).

<sup>165</sup>Bill Frost, “Fish Farm Gang Extends Deadly Net on Aid Route; Bosnia,” *The Times*, June 8, 1993, sec. Overseas News, <https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/317985032?accountid=28992> (accessed November 18, 2013).

<sup>166</sup>Eric Geiger, “Neo-Nazis Help Croatians in Bosnia,” *San Francisco Chronicle (pre-1997 Fulltext)*, April 5, 1994, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/303267962?accountid=28992> (accessed November 18, 2013); Nancy Nusser, “Bosnia’s Bloody War Attracts Mercenaries Seeking ‘Bang Bang,’” *Austin American Statesman*, April 24, 1993, sec. News, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/256492793?accountid=28992> (accessed January 30, 2014).

joined paramilitaries to fulfill their desires, support their ideals, or “become socially useful.”<sup>167</sup>

## CONCLUSION

On November 21, 1995, President Milošević, President Izetbegović, and President Tudjman signed the Dayton Peace Accords, which formally ended the war in Bosnia.<sup>168</sup> The war in Croatia was already over after the Croatian Army had defeated the Krajina Serbs in Operation Storm (Oluja) from August 4 – 8, 1995.<sup>169</sup> Though the Dayton Peace Accords brought peace to Croatia and Bosnia, relations between the Croats, Serbs, and Muslims remained tense even to this day. The narrative for the wars in Croatia and Bosnia from 1991 - 1995 is one of political fighting, unresolved ethnic and religious tensions, economic collapse, nationalism, and break down in political institutions that left the citizens with no clear direction and an uncertain future. During this turmoil and search for a unifying direction, law and order broke down and war broke out. Paramilitary groups formed, participated in the fighting, and used the conflict to pursue political, economic, and altruistic goals while supporting the war effort.<sup>170</sup> Many committed atrocities against combatants and civilians that have deepened the divide between the ethnic groups and that could spark another war in the future. This paper examined several paramilitary groups that fought in the conflicts in the conflicts in Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and questioned if their participation intensified the conflicts and delayed a civil, political, and non-violent breakup. The contention is that state leaders were not able to come to a political agreement on the future of Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia because too many other actors were involved in the conflict who were

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<sup>167</sup>Colovic, “Football, Hooligans and War,” 395.

<sup>168</sup>United Nations Security Council, “General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” [http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA\\_951121\\_DaytonAgreement.pdf](http://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/BA_951121_DaytonAgreement.pdf) (accessed February 4, 2014).

<sup>169</sup>Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, 2002. United States and Central Intelligence Agency, *Balkan Battlegrounds*, 367-377.

<sup>170</sup>*Yugoslavia’s Wars: The Problem from Hell*, 24.

willing to fight for their own objectives. While the paramilitaries had a variety of reasons for fighting, this paper categorized them into those that fought primarily for political, economic, or personal objectives. It is inconclusive whether the involvement of paramilitaries delayed a civil, non-violent break-up of the country. Certainly, by their very participation in the fighting, they contributed to the violence.

It is probable that paramilitaries that fought for political objectives that differed from those of the political leaders complicated the peace process since they made it difficult for negotiators to find a solution that satisfied all sides and sought to undermine the political leadership that had to negotiate peace terms. Fikret Abdić attempted to usurp power from President Izetbegović by signing a peace deal on behalf of the Bosnian government without Izetbegović's consent, creating his own mini-state within Bosnia with its own army, with himself as the leader, and switching allegiances to side with his enemies against his government. His actions caused the Bosnian Army to divert resources away from its war against the Bosnian Serbs as it had to put down this rebellion and caused international negotiators to question how to craft a peace deal that would appease this new political entity. The HOS and HVO had opposing end states in mind with no possibility for a compromise that could unify them. To realize their objectives, they both expanded their political and military activities outside of Croatia, which contributed to the prolongation of the conflict by adding another party to the peace negotiations. However, the effects of their rivalry were limited as their conflict was over by the end of 1992 when the HOS disbanded. After 1992, the Croatian government directed Croatia's war objectives in both Bosnia and Croatia. Vojislav Šešelj used his paramilitary group to provoke an escalation of fighting in Croatia and Bosnia, expanded his activities throughout Croatia and Bosnia to support hardline Serb local politicians in Croatia and Bosnia to incite violence between the ethnic groups, and actively opposed Milošević when it appeared that Milošević was willing to accept a peace deal that did not appeal to Šešelj. His provocations and pursuit of political power did

contribute to the escalation of violence, hatred between the ethnic groups, and difficulty in negotiating a peaceful resolution to the conflicts.

Paramilitary groups took advantage of the break down in law and order to turn a profit on the conflicts. They stole from aid convoys, looted abandoned stores and homes, held people for ransom, skirted economic sanctions, and transported people out of conflict zones for money. These crimes exacerbated the situation on the ground but did not, in themselves, affect the peace negotiations. Jusuf Prazina used the war to enrich himself and his paramilitary group because he felt he deserved it for having defended Sarajevo from the Serbs. Mušan Topalović used the political cover he had from President Izetbegović to maintain his control of the Sarajevo black market. Željko Ražnatović conducted extensive ethnic cleansing operations throughout Croatia and Bosnia and profited from the economic crisis caused by the war. While Juka and Caco did not expand their illegal operations outside of Sarajevo, Arkan roamed throughout Croatia and Bosnia, and later expanded into Kosovo. Their involvement in the war added a layer of complexity to the war as they pursued their own agendas that did not offer a peace settlement as a goal. Juka switched sides in the war and attacked the Muslim forces he used to be a part of; Caco's criminal activity was the focus of a purge in the Bosnian Army by Izetbegović to bring command and control to its units under the authority of the president; and, Arkan readily supported the expansion of Serbian-held territory and profited from the sanctions affecting Serbia. While none of these paramilitary groups purposefully sabotaged peace negotiations, they also did not actively seek out a peaceful resolution to the conflict and instead, took advantage of the situation to enrich themselves.<sup>171</sup> In the cases of Juka and Caco, the Bosnian government had to divert resources to bring them under control. In the case of Arkan, the Serb factions (Bosnian Serbs, Krajina Serbs, Milošević regime) used him to prosecute the war on their behalf. For this service, he received

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<sup>171</sup>Mueller, *The Remnants of War*, 22.



arms, payment, and a free hand to loot the areas under his control. When the prospects for turning a profit in a region declined, so too did his group's activities.<sup>172</sup>

It is also likely that the paramilitaries that fought for religious ideals or personal cause did not purposefully hinder the peace process to pursue their goals. Instead, they took advantage of the conflict to fight for their causes and stopped fighting once the political leaders signed the Dayton Peace Accords. The Mujahedin in Bosnia fought primarily for a religious conviction rather than any political or monetary objectives; mercenaries primarily fought as a means of employment; and, individual thrill seekers and weekend warriors primarily fought for the thrill of fighting. Their motivations for taking part in the war in Yugoslavia were many, and they often overlapped. For example, a mercenary might fight because it is his job, but he might also enjoy the camaraderie or the economic gains that came from looting. But, it is unlikely that any of the paramilitaries in this group directly affected the peace process in any significant way. By their participation in hostilities, they helped sustain the war like fuel to a fire. However, none of their motivations for fighting was an ideal for which entire populations would fight.

The purpose of examining the role paramilitary groups played in the resolution to the wars in Yugoslavia is to provide leaders with insights into the motivations that sub-national groups play in wars and their contribution to the narrative of those wars and their final resolutions. Recently, Western leaders have questioned if and how they should get involved in conflict in Syria. With a myriad of paramilitary groups involved in the fight, each with its own objectives that are often unclear and changing, choosing a group to support is difficult. As the conflicts in Yugoslavia have demonstrated, paramilitary groups will often support one side or another while pursuing ulterior objectives. Before making a decision to support one group over

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<sup>172</sup>“The Serbs Want Peace,” *IHS Janes*, January 7, 1993, <https://janes.ihs.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/CustomPages/Janes/DisplayPage.aspx?DocType=News&ItemId=+++1551098&Pubabbrev=JIWK> (accessed October 1, 2013).

another, it is important for leaders to understand the operational environment, the relationships different groups have with each other and their motivations for fighting, and possible second and third order consequences of aligning with one or more groups to a multi-player fight.

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